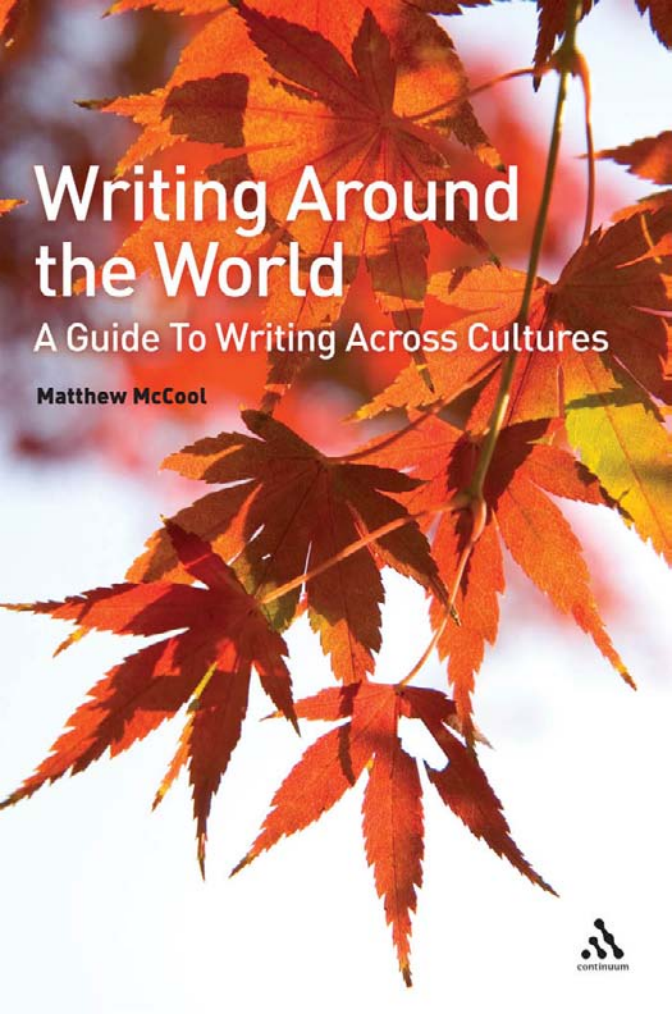




Writing Around the World

A Guide To Writing Across Cultures

Matthew McCool

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Writing Around the World

A Guide To Writing
Across Cultures

By
Matthew McCool



Continuum International Publishing Group

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For Nadya
Я всегда буду тебя любить

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I am thankful to my parents, who have always been welcoming during times of focus and concentration. I am also grateful to my brother, whose sharp wit and quick mind make for excellent conversation. Ted Randall has been a close and faithful friend for more years than I can remember, and a gracious guide on all things Africa.

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Foreword

In the early part of the twentieth century, composers like Schönberg thought that once they had developed atonal music, nobody could ever go back to writing tonal music. But with time, atonality proved to be only one part of the twentieth century composer's expansive arsenal. The same became true for twelve-tone compositions, Indian rhythms (Philip Glass), minimal shifting music (Steve Reich), and other new elements. Atonal music did not replace tonal music. Instead, atonal music became a new color on the composer's palette, a new tool in the shed. One hundred years ago, this musical evolution could have never been imagined. But history unfolds in cycles, and writing, like music, evolves along a continuous spiral of time.

This book shows how different cultures use language and how an author can adapt her writing to better communicate. As a musician, I find this similar to, say, a guide on how to combine Indian melodies with European harmonies and African rhythms. One can see this in a rapidly changing frame of reference, moving from the local to the global. In the brief history of human time, closed family life gave way to a tribal perspective, which gave way to a state perspective and, eventually, a national perspective. Today, a common frame of reference is not with family or even country—it is global. Ours is a world vision. And this is why writing, like the evolution of music, will eventually be different from anything we can imagine today.

That which Matthew identifies as different perspectives, lenses, and cultural approaches to writing will eventually become part of the writer's linguistic palette. Direct and indirect uses of language will be understood equally by writers and readers. And instead of relying on only one type of writing, we will have both, just like a modern composer's blended use of tonal and atonal musical forms.

—Ottmar Liebert, Santa Fe NM

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Preface

This book is designed for writers from every corner of the globe. Admittedly, it is written from an American perspective, but one in which the insights of culture have been streamlined to provide a clear and accessible guide. The primary inspiration for this book surfaced from a need to help authors effectively write in and for different countries and cultures. All too often, people assume that writing is more or less the same around the world. The main difference, so the argument goes, is that of language, which can be bypassed with effective translation. This assumption is not only unfortunate but also wrong. Instead, cultures write using different patterns because they strive for different goals. Many of these factors can be traced to deep cultural values and beliefs.

While the elements of structure and style are targeted for nonnative speakers of English, it is also useful for native speakers. One of the best ways for learning how to write is not only to see good examples in one's own language and culture, but to also compare them with equally good works in other languages and cultures. This book takes the same stance, offering a range of writing strategies from every corner of the globe. As a result, this book has been written for a truly global audience.

Given the large number of resources on the subject, one might ask whether another book on writing around the world is necessary. The short answer, of course, is yes. The main reason is that this book not only illustrates culture within a practical framework, it also offers a quick study of global coherence, sentence cohesion, and style. All of these elements of writing, and more, aid the writer who is learning to communicate in a new language and culture. Consider the role of a thesis statement.

A thesis statement is a one or two sentence claim that captures the theme, objective, and argument of a paper. Many native speakers of English are accustomed to incorporating thesis statements early in their papers, usually in the introduction. Quickly delivering the reader to a clear objective and thesis reflects a number of cultural values, such as a need to bring forth a personal argument. Cultures that value individual identity, for instance, are often comfortable and even encouraging for writers who formulate their own opinions. As a result, writers with highly individualized cultural values feel compelled

and are usually taught to offer a central point early in an argument, which is then defended throughout the remainder of a paper.

This pattern is different for many nonnative speakers of English, who commonly use what is called a delayed or even nonexistent thesis statement. Although a delayed thesis is thought to be poor writing among native speakers of English, this assumption is incorrect when applied to other cultures. Writers intent on using a delayed thesis often come from cultures that value group harmony more than personal identity. Under these circumstances, writers from group oriented cultures are less accustomed to writing in support of an individual argument. Instead, the purpose of writing is to offer a contemporary and safe analysis of some problem that is readily accepted by the group.

This book addresses the complete writing process, ranging from emotion and language to logic and persuasion to style and grace. It is designed to be read and used efficiently for writers with little time to spare and a big desire to write well. There are many books about the elements of good writing. Regrettably, most of these resources provide tools designed only for writers who have an implicit understanding of the culture in which they write. This book is different because it assumes that the writer brings culturally derived assumptions about how the world works. And this makes all the difference when writing around the world.

The complexities of intercultural writing are immense, and I have attempted to distill its nuances in as few principles as possible. Examples are simplified, major differences magnified, and minor differences minimized, all in an attempt to convey the complexities of intercultural writing in a simple and practical manner. Readers with immediate needs should first study Chapter 4, which contains comparative descriptions, contrastive analyses, and suggestions. Brief synopses of the book's chapters are as follow.

- Chapter 1 Provides a working definition of culture that is connected to developing arguments, using references, global coherence, sentence cohesion, and style.
- Chapter 2 Examines the deepest dimensions of culture. Topics include uncertainty, social relationships, communication strategies, the application of principles and rules, and orientations toward time.
- Chapter 3 Language is the primary vehicle by which information is exchanged, and culture has a profound impact on its effectiveness. Attitude, clarity, formality, and emotion are all examined in relation to intercultural writing.
- Chapter 4 Cultures bring different assumptions to the writing process, all of which contribute to the writer's goals and objectives. This chapter includes anatomy of a paper, basic principles, matters of form, and style.

- Chapter 5 Analyzes notions of responsibility and connects it with logical fallacies and broader ethical considerations.
- Chapter 6 Provides several guides for assessing the writing strategies of the target reader.

This book has also been tested in several intercultural settings, first with writers from Latin America, then with writers from the Middle East and, finally, with writers from Asia. Along the way, writers have visited from Russia, the Himalayas, Africa, and most countries in Western Europe. While far from complete, this broad spectrum of working with these writers has enabled me to improve this book in countless ways.

A final note about this book should be mentioned. The framework, concepts, ideas, and practical examples are simplified for ease of use. Practicality necessitates simplicity. I have applied basic principles associated with science writing that hopefully aid prospective writers from diverse cultural backgrounds. This approach is not without concern, since the richness of cultural diversity is inherently resistant to basic principles. On the other hand, if the task of writing for another culture were easy then there would be little need for a practical guide.

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Basic Principles of Intercultural Writing

1

Chapter outline

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Overview

- defines basic principles of intercultural writing
- examines argumentation, references, global coherence, sentence cohesion, and style
- connects culture with writing styles

Cultures do not write using the same assumptions, strategies, and goals. These basic characteristics are of the utmost importance for someone writing in or for another culture. American writers, for instance, are accustomed to quickly moving to a thesis, supporting it with two or three main points, incorporating a plausible counterargument, and concluding with an assertive but open summary. Language and style should be spare but meaningful, lean but not

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Table 1.1 High altitude differences between writer responsibility and reader responsibility

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
clear	flowery
concise	ornate
action-oriented	subject-oriented
practical	theoretical
deductive	quasi-inductive

mechanical. The goal of most American writing is to inform and persuade, a process challenged by a need to write clear and concise prose. Beautiful as this strategy may sound, it is not universal (Table 1.1).

Writer responsibility is when the burden of communication is on the writer. Writer responsible cultures emphasize clarity and concision, actions over nouns, practicality instead of theory, and a deductive or tight chain of reasoning. Writer responsible cultures also use an *AB to BC to CD* pattern. Also called parallel progression, the goal of writer responsibility is to capture and maintain interest by guiding the reader through each point. The topic of one sentence overlaps with the topic of the next sentence. The same is true for paragraphs in which the idea of one block of text overlaps with the next block of text. This pattern is called writer responsible because it demands less of the reader.

Reader responsibility is when the burden of communication is on the reader. Reader responsible cultures emphasize flowery and ornate prose, subjects over actions, theory instead of practice, and an inductive or quasi-inductive line of reasoning. Reader responsible cultures use an *AB to CD to EF* pattern. Also called sequential progression, the goal of reader responsibility is to provide the rich detail and context of a topic. The topic of one sentence is handed off to the topic of the next sentence. Little to no overlap is present in reader responsible prose. Paragraphs, like reader responsible sentences, may also appear disjointed or loosely connected. And some topics in reader responsibility may appear to veer off on a tangent, although such perspectives are normally confined to writer responsible readers.

Reader responsible cultures interpret writer responsibility as obvious, simplistic, practical, and narrow. Writer responsible cultures interpret reader responsibility as saccharine or poetic, excessively detailed, dismissive of practical implications, and broad or unfocused. All cultures combine elements of

both writer responsibility and reader responsibility, but these differences neatly characterize the potential complexities of writing to different cultures.

One of the best ways to understand the main differences in writing strategies is to look at a resume. The resume is one of the most basic of all informative and persuasive documents, yet it is layered in numerous cultural values and beliefs. Consider a reader responsible resume from Japan (Figure 1.1).

Takashi's resume is based on a standard Japanese format known as *rirekisho*. When writer responsible readers study a translated *rirekisho*, responses are normally aimed at its thick table borders, personal photograph, date of birth, and gender. The table is important because it is part of a cultural standard, which asks all applicants to provide the same information. Aside from completing an application for a company, many cultures have never seen a universal resume format. The personal photograph is also noteworthy because it is inappropriate in many writer responsible cultures. The same concerns also apply to date of birth and gender. Although it is sometimes possible to estimate an applicant's age based on their first name, since names tend to change across generations, it is illegal to ask for one's age in some cultures. Gender is similar to age in that it is easily determined but rarely mentioned in a resume, at least in writer responsible cultures.

People have few problems describing the major elements of a Japanese resume. Although Japanese are encouraged or required to use a universal resume format, many global writers are unaware that this requirement is based on a deep sense of obligation to groups. Gender and age reflects -group-oriented cultural values because social harmony is emphasized and the presumption of equality minimized. And the universal standard of using a preformatted table appeals to cultures seeking to minimize uncertainty. If each applicant has the same information in the exact location as all other applicants then there is little concern for inconsistency. Although all of these reader responsible characteristics are based on a long history of Japanese values, one of the most interesting features is found at the bottom of the page—the objective statement.

In the bottom row of the resume is a sentence describing Takashi's career objective: "My main focus is commercial photography; however, my work also includes portraits of plants, flowers, and natural scenes." The use of an objective statement may seem like the least relevant piece of a resume, but it is probably one of the most important for some cultures. Among writer responsible cultures, the objective statement or purpose of the applicant may be a crucial piece of information for employers because it is used to determine

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履歴書

2007 年 10 月 23日現在

ふりがな ともおか たかし			
氏 名 鞆岡 隆史			
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ホームページ	http://photo.67.org/ E-MAIL photo@67.org		
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現住所 〒150-0001 東京都渋谷区神宮前1-1-12 原宿ニュースカイハイツ203		03-3408-4605	
		FAX	
		03-3408-4625	
ふりがな		電話 ()	
連絡先〒		—	
同上		FAX ()	
		—	

年	学歴・経歴
1994	京都精華大学美術学部デザイン学科卒業
1994 - 97	スタジオOPTにて山下順に師事
1995 - 99	沖縄へ撮影旅行
1996	第二回ヤングポートフォリオ賞
1998 -	小西裕典に師事 ガムプリントをはじめ伝統技法を学ぶ
1998 -	劇団MONOの専属フォトグラファーとして公演に参加
2002	フランス・パリへ撮影旅行 ガムプリントについての取材
2005 -	株式会社ロクナナにフォトグラファーとして参加
2006	Photoshop world にて講演
2007	全米写真家協会 (PPA) に加入
コマーシャルフォトを中心に植物のポートレート、風景など、自身の作品としても製作。	

Figure 1.1 A standard reader responsible resume. Notice the thick preformatted tables, personal photographs and data, and the objective statement in the bottom. (Credit Takashi Tomooka of Tokyo, Japan).

the applicant's placement with an organization. Objective statements often reflect past work experience, which to some extent reflects future goals.

An objective statement is also analogous to a thesis statement, since both aim to explain a purpose or goal. The reason Takashi places an objective statement at the end of his resume is that it reflects a common reader responsible strategy in which an objective or thesis is delayed. In many reader responsible cultures, employees are not hired to make immediate contributions to a company. They are hired for their ability to be trained for a job. Writer responsible employers are often puzzled by this difference, and it is based on the essential characteristics, values, and beliefs that distinguish cultures.

1.1 Defining culture

There are many definitions of culture. Culture may refer to social, political, religious, economic, or gender differences. Others may think about culture in terms of what is normally called globalization, such as the impact of fast food on global cuisine or how The World Bank affects the economic position of developing countries. And others still consider culture to be all that is obvious to the casual onlooker—the latest fashion, high-octane movie, and celebrity gaffe. In some respect, all of these aspects of life are embedded within culture. Important as these features may be, the most vital elements of culture are found much deeper. In this respect, culture is a lot like a body of water.

On the water's surface are found the most accessible parts of culture, such as music, food, and art. When traveling in Japan, one may discover the sounds of the bamboo flute or *shakuhachi*, sushi served in a perfect *bento*, and the beauty of a traditional woodblock painting. Many people agree that these characteristics are important for understanding culture and may even help explain how different people perceive the world. The problem is that many of these outward characteristics fail to address the most important parts of culture. Like a body of water, the deepest dimensions of life are often found beneath the surface.

Beneath the surface lies a vast interrelated web of life, a culture's most deeply held values and beliefs. These deep cultural values include uncertainty, social relationships, communication strategies, application of rules, and time. This brief list is by no means exhaustive, but it provides a basic framework for understanding how different cultures write and communicate. While all of these values evolve over large tracts of time, they are also essential, naturalized, and enduring.

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It is the “invisibility” of culture that makes intercultural writing such a difficult process. Acknowledging and accepting a new cultural perspective is complex, or even impossible, but certain frames of mind make the new view a more pleasant experience. Despite these obstacles, the overarching tendency to overlook these traits remains all too common.

1.2 Developing arguments

The notion of generating an argument is natural among writer responsible cultures. Part of this comfort with argumentation is based on a heightened sense of personal identity. Everyone is faced with developing a sense of self, a process that begins in adolescence. But aside from individual differences in personality, culture is largely responsible for deciding the rules for how one interacts with groups. Cultures with strong dispositions toward social harmony resist personal arguments whereas more individualistic cultures are apt to support personal arguments and persuasion. Harmonious cultures, designed to ease tension among people, encourage a sensitive awareness of potential problems in social relations. Such a strong collective value surfaces among cultures that exercise little geographic mobility, foster a deep awareness of history and context, and align oneself to the goals of a group. As a result, writers from collective cultures are often puzzled with tasks asking for a personal opinion.

Likewise, many writer responsible students are surprised when studying at foreign universities. Accustomed to asserting one’s opinions in class and in writing, a writer responsible student meets resistance from reader responsible professors. Instead of active participation and a student-centered approach, she is likely to discover that reader responsible academic life is based mostly on lectures, notes, memorization, and tests. Papers are assigned to make sure students have developed writing skills indicating awareness of history and context. And instead of deriving a unique argument on a controversial topic, reader responsible students are rewarded for understanding how they fit in with the group. Developing arguments is a culturally embedded activity.

The best advice for students from group-oriented students who study in writer responsible cultures is to encourage self-directed learning. This is a difficult task to follow because persuasion is a foreign concept in reader responsible cultures. Developing arguments is especially difficult when one considers that teachers from group-oriented cultures normally assign writing topics to students. Writer responsible teachers are known for their relatively hands-off

approach toward education. Further, many writer responsible teachers view themselves as guides who gently nudge their students in a particular direction. Such teachers are often uncomfortable suggesting particular arguments, preferring to take a secondary role in the writing process. Although argumentation is encumbered by cultural differences, there are also some concerns with regard to the type of reasoning one should use for persuasion. And history is a good guide for understanding this difference.

Aristotle is renowned for articulating three major strategies of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos is an author's credibility, pathos refers to the appeal of a reader's values, and logos refers to logic and good reasons. Ethos is effective when a writer has appropriate experience or education, pathos is useful for connecting with the reader's emotions, and logos is necessary for solving problems and reason. Although one may suspect that this triad is equivalent around the world, cultures usually have predispositions for specific persuasive strategies.

Writer responsible cultures are normally defined by a preference for logos, which appeals to logic, sound reasoning, and facts. Although author credibility is important, and reader emotion unavoidable, it is the basis of logic and reasoning that is thought to be most convincing. Part of the emphasis on logic in writer responsible cultures stems from what is known as the presumption of equality, which is different from actual equality. The presumption of equality is based on the idea that people are more or less the same, which is why, for instance, writer responsible patients are inclined to be proactive for their own health care. Although a physician is by definition an expert in some area of medicine, it is not uncommon for writer responsible patients to challenge a doctor. This quality leads writer responsible patients to seek second or third opinions, research problems in the literature, and scrutinize medical databases. While physician credentials may be important, it is the logical basis for diagnosis and treatment that is critical among writer responsible cultures. The balance is reversed in many other cultures, leading to preferences for author credibility and emotional appeals.

Ethos and pathos are more important in reader responsible cultures. Ethos, or author credibility, is crucial in high power distance cultures. The Chinese word *li*, for instance, refers to social stratification and understanding one's natural place in a group. Hierarchy and social placement is based on factors such as surname, geographic location, education and school reputation, and historical context. Developing good arguments for readers from stratified cultures may depend on the many factors that lie outside of personal achievement.

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This means an author will improve his position by capitalizing on professional strengths, including education, personal connections, and credentials. An especially productive individual may have little influence in a high power distance or reader responsible culture. A similar pattern applies to pathos or emotional appeals.

Developing an argument based on an emotional appeal is more effective among reader responsible cultures. In some respect, readers from reader responsible cultures assume that a hidden meaning is embedded within a paper. Perhaps unsurprisingly, reader responsible authors attempting to develop argumentative essays for writer responsible audiences are likely to use ineffective emotional appeals. Writer responsible cultures assume that emotion clouds judgment and that pathos adversely affects an argument. Further, some writer responsible cultures are likely to classify an emotional writer as incapable of thinking clearly about his topic, an obvious barrier to logical thinking.

Writers of any culture have trouble developing arguments, regardless of their intended audience. Such problems are complicated when the reader has different cultural assumptions about good writing, with irregular expectations for author credibility, emotional appeals, and logic. When Japanese readers assess British essays, for instance, critiques are consistently labeled “simplistic, repetitive, and obvious.” British readers evaluating Japanese essays come away with an opposite set of terms, including “detailed, irregular, and confusing.” These differences start with the very beginning of a paper, the initial formation and development of an argument. Naturally, if these assumptions are allowed to persist throughout the entire writing process then the final result will appear to be a simplistic rant or an unfocused and unoriginal paper.

1.3 Sources and citation

Finding and using references seems like the most basic of tasks associated with writing. Despite the universal need to support an argument with those who spoke before us, culture provides the lens by which authors credit their work. Some writers seek evidence and wisdom in the books of antiquity, as passed down through lore and literature across vast tracks of time. Yet other writers rely on a different kind of support, one that is current and quantifiable. If the wisdom of time reveals anything about the conflicts of human nature, it is because such knowledge has withstood the test of experimentation. But culture tells us which form of proof is most effective.

Within a global framework, writer responsible cultures such as the United States have a brief historical anchor that dates only to the early seventeenth

century. Several hundred years may sound like a lot, but it is only a blip on the registers of time when compared against cultures such as China, which boasts a 5,000-year history. Or consider the Aboriginal Australians, whose ancestry dates back 40,000 to 50,000 years. Cultures with strong group affiliations and close individual bonds often enjoy long historical contexts. India, China, Russia, and Japan are each characterized as not only group-oriented cultures but also societies with long and often revered histories. Historical context and reverence for people who lived before us may seem like an unrelated aspect of collecting and using references, but they are closely related to this initial sense of credibility.

Reader responsible students who arrive in writer responsible cultures are often surprised by their different citation strategies. In China, for instance, writers are expected to use sources steeped in historical meaning. Confucius is as likely to appear in a paper on ethics as in a paper on business or medicine. Further, Chinese writers may not even be expected to cite references, as in native English-speaking countries. Instead, a Chinese author presumes that her reader is already familiar with a famous text, thereby eliminating the need for reference. The idea is taken further because relying on ancient wisdom also indicates that the author is knowledgeable and educated. As a result, writers from countries with extensive and celebrated histories bring the assumption that the same strategy also applies for their new global reader. This is obviously a mistake, since it amounts to what is called plagiarism in many corners of the world.

Writers from group-oriented cultures are also likely to collect and use references that reflect broad historical significance. This tendency grounds the writing process in maxims, aphorisms, and proverbs. The problem occurs when a reader brings different assumptions about references, which may include a desire to minimize the use of historical texts in favor of more recent works. This is especially true of technical and scientific prose, two areas of inquiry normally based on current and future innovations. German scientific papers, for instance, are known for their relatively brief literature reviews, detailed methodologies, and definitive claims, leaving only a small degree of uncertainty for the reader. Scientific inquiry rarely reveals definitive laws in a single burst. Instead, empirical research tends to progress slowly and is accepted only after extensive replication.

Gathering references is a cultural activity embedded within the writing process. Collecting and using references is a critical stage of the writing process because it defines the direction of the paper. If a writer brings the kind of cultural values that revere group orientation and historical context, then she is

likely to search for and use sources from sage historical figures. But if a writer is aware that a reader holds current literature in higher esteem, then she is likely to begin the writing process with the right kind of sources.

1.4 Global coherence

Making sure that every piece of a paper fits together is called coherence. Although there are different types of coherence, it is generally defined as the degree to which a paper makes sense to a reader. Determining the effectiveness of coherence is a complex task because individual interpretation can vary. Author credibility, appeal to the reader’s emotions, and logic all inform the success of global coherence. Although global coherence is a difficult topic to examine, some of its mystery can be removed by analyzing three distinct versions—parallel progression, sequential progression, and extended parallel progression (Table 1.2).

Parallel progression is when the topic of successive sentences is the same. This is similar to a relay race in which a runner passes a baton to the next runner. Like the transfer of a baton, parallel progression passes the topic of a sentence onto the next sentence. The result is a seamless exchange from beginning to end. This strategy demands less of the reader because the topic is always vivid as it progresses within a paragraph. English language writers follow parallel progression. The other two types of global coherence differ from parallel progression by their lack of explicit connection between sentences.

Sequential progression appears more complex because topic transfer is not direct or obvious. Instead of handing a baton off to the next runner, the exchange is interrupted by an errant spectator. The race continues, but it seems a little less direct. In actuality, writers from cultures using sequential progression see this type of writing as effective because it incorporates crucial details. From a sequential perspective, writers from cultures emphasizing parallel progression appear simple and obvious. Parallel progression writers view sequential progression papers as delayed and unfocused. Sequential-progression writers see parallel progression papers as basic and obvious.

Table 1.2 Three major strategies for developing global coherence

Global coherence	Description
parallel	topic from one sentence feeds directly into the next sentence
sequential	topics of successive sentences are different
extended parallel	combines elements of parallel and sequential progression

While parallel progression and sequential progression are grounds for an endless source of confusion, there is also a third coherence strategy that combines elements of both.

Extended parallel progression is when a paper's introduction and conclusion are consistent but separated by a nonsequential body. In this respect, extended parallel progression combines elements of both parallel progression and sequential progression. This kind of relay race begins with a team member who hands the baton to an errant runner, which is soon returned to a member of the original team. The effect is one in which a claim is stated, shifts suddenly to a related but peripheral point, and then returns to the original claim. Russian, French, and Spanish writers follow extended parallel progression.

All three types of global coherence—parallel, sequential, and extended parallel—begin and end with either an implicit or explicit claim. But their paths are different. One strategy gives a sense that the argument proceeds directly from beginning to end. Another jumps from one sentence to the next, leaping from comment to topic. And a third strategy ties both ends of a paper together with loose filler. The essential point behind these different writing strategies is that they are all examples of good writing. The problem occurs when reading a paper with different cultural assumptions.

1.5 Sentence cohesion

Coherence and cohesion refer to different aspects of a paper. Coherence refers to the big picture while cohesion refers to the smaller connections between paragraphs and sentences. Despite these differences, it is important to note that cohesion does not create coherence and coherence does not necessarily lead toward cohesion. Sentence cohesion ultimately refers to a matter of flow, or how words create sentences and sentences create paragraphs.

Cohesion comes in many types, some of which are similar to the cultural differences associated with global coherence. Authors from writer responsible cultures that value direct communication are accustomed to a tight cohesive chain. Direct or digital forms of communication capture the essence of pure communication in which content is lifted above delivery. Because content is the most important feature of communication, it is crucial to use explicit markers linking a topic from one sentence to the next sentence. The most important feature of this type of cohesion is that the end of one sentence prepares the reader for the beginning of the next sentence. This kind of causal chain is explicit and deductive in which the link of one idea latches onto the link of the next idea. In some respect, this kind of writer responsible writing

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resembles the type of global coherence known as parallel progression. This brand of cohesion is common among cultures in which English is the native language.

Another kind of sentence cohesion resembles sequential and extended parallel progression. Instead of a tight chain of reasoning, this second type is characterized by its flexibility. For instance, sequential progression is defined by its loose construction in which the topic of one sentence is related but different from the topic of the next sentence. This second kind of sentence cohesion is also similar to extended parallel progression in which clear points at either end of a paper are punctuated with evidence that may seem only loosely related. The untrained intercultural eye may interpret this kind of writing as unclear and irrelevant.

Reader responsible authors may find themselves in the uneasy situation of having to create tight chains of reasoning for their reader. This is a difficult task because it violates a number of beliefs one may have about good writing. In effect, this new method of writing appears cold and even offensive. But the most important difference may actually be the notion of dealing with its apparent simplicity. Instead of incorporating deep contextual meaning into a piece, as is common among reader responsible writers, a paper is weighted by a need to say the obvious. This trait leads to the concern that a paper lacks an objective or purpose.

Different strategies for sentence cohesion may be explained with a brief science analogy. Imagine walking into a room of neuroscientists talking about the brain—the amygdala, hippocampus, fusiform gyrus, prefrontal cortex. Their conversation may as well be in a foreign language. Unless one is trained in neuroscience, it is difficult to understand the technical terms of their conversation. The sort of discussion one might expect to hear among a group of neuroscientists is a type of reader responsible communication. Writing is the same because we can be assured that a neuroscientist writing to a colleague will probably use the shared language of neuroscience. In some respect, this example resembles sequential and extended parallel progression, which is different from a writer responsible perspective.

One expects different elements of sentence cohesion from native English-speaking cultures. Instead, native English speakers are accustomed to and taught to write in a way that adapts the complexities of a topic for a general reader. Walking into a conversation among neuroscientists, one hopes for a sympathetic voice to adapt or translate the technical complexities of the conversation. The adaptation from a complex topic to a more general reader

is a prominent feature of parallel progression writer-responsible. Instead of excluding people—say, disregarding an astronomer untrained in neuroscience—the writer responsible approach seeks to include as many different readers.

1.6 Matters of style

Perhaps the most enigmatic feature of writing style is that element which indicates tone, speed, and flare. Underscoring these points is the maxim that good style is simple and clear. Language should be spare but not mechanical, lean but not sickly. Stylistic conventions of bureaucratic, legalistic, and academic writing are normally centered on abstract, abstruse, and impenetrable prose. Perhaps ironically, much of the advice on good writing discourage these forms of style since they come across as pompous and bloated. Important as these points of style may be, there is also a remarkable inconsistency in these rules across cultures.

Writer responsible cultures are accustomed to a common but relative list of reminders. Do not overwrite or overstate. Avoid qualifiers, leave a bit of mystery by avoiding every detail and, above all, avoid clichés. The assumptions behind these points are that writing should be explicit, clear, accumulative, and responsive to a reader's needs. But not all cultures subscribe to these rules of thumb. Consider the rule that overwriting is poor writing.

Overwriting refers to the fondness of saying more than is necessary to convey an idea or concept. This usually means avoiding thick, ornate, and flowery language. Instead of saying “the cardinal landed on this maple tree,” the overwritten piece may say “the astonishingly red beauty of a bird found a serene and high perch on this maple tree.” The problem with these two examples is that both versions exemplify effective style, but only within their appropriate context. The lean style of the first version is typical of writer responsible cultures whereas the second version is customary among reader responsible cultures. Naturally, the difference between the two phrases is rooted in deep cultural values.

Take the advice that writing should be lean and spare. A major assumption behind this stylistic rule is equality, the notion that people everywhere are the same. While absolute equality is an idealistic view of human nature, some cultures attempt to reduce hierarchical differences between people. The desire to reduce hierarchical space between people, for instance, is reflected in the common drive to write prose that anyone can understand. Democratic ideals lead

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to democratic writing. It is important to note that many of the foundational rules associated with good writing are true only in the environment in which they have been created. Stylistic elements of good writing in other cultures are less democratic, but remain appropriate for the context.

The elements of style among reader responsible texts tend to rely on repetition. Reader responsible style is characterized by its reverberation of words, phrases, and blocks of text. On some level this recurrence is based on an aural sense of writing, a fluidity based largely on the use of conjunctions such as the words “and” and “so.” An additional layer of stylistic complexity among reader responsible texts is a varied vocabulary and complex sentence structure. This style resembles an intrinsic form of writing that demands more of the reader. In some respect, writing with a broad vocabulary appeals to an aesthetic sense of style. One criticism of this kind of writing, at least from a writer responsible perspective, is wordy prose. Take a similar stylistic difference found in good Slavic writing.

Negative constructions are based on phrasing a statement in a negative manner. Instead of using the word “same,” a negative construction uses “not different.” Much of the stylistic advice about negative constructions is based on preferences for directness, clarity, and vigor. This strategy does not work well in other cultures where negative constructions are forms of good writing. The difference is also found in how languages accommodate or cope with the use of a double negative.

Has this ever been seen before? (English)

Is it possible that no one has ever seen anything like that anywhere? (Russian)

The well-known double negative, a hallmark of poor English language writing, is prized in Slavic cultures. Part of this stems from the region’s long and varied history, marked by remarkable success and, more frequently, unfortunate collapse. Eastern Europeans are used to coping with the negatives of life. As a result, the stylistic use of double negatives in some Slavic languages is carried into papers written in other languages. And the writer, eager to please, is susceptible to criticism for writing in a way that is entirely natural.

Differences between positive and negative attributes in reader responsible and writer responsible prose are also passed onto other stylistic features. Overstating, overwriting, qualifiers, detail and description, and figures of speech all reflect an additional list of differences between writer responsible and reader responsible cultures.

Table 1.3 Relationship between writer responsibility, reader responsibility, and culture

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
uncertainty is normal	uncertainty is threatening
individual identity	group identity
digital communication	analog communication
universalist rules	particularist rules
clock time	human time

1.7 Culture and writing

Before revealing the deepest dimensions of culture, it is useful to obtain a sense of how values and beliefs relate to different writing strategies. Some cultures use writer responsibility, which places the burden of communication on the writer. Other cultures use reader responsibility, which places the burden of communication on the reader. In reality, cultures use a combination of writer responsible and reader responsible strategies (Table 1.3).

Writer responsibility is normally associated with low uncertainty avoidance, personal identity, direct or digital forms of communication, universal application of rules, and strict punctuality. Reader responsibility is normally associated with high uncertainty avoidance, group identity, indirect or analog forms of communication, particular application of rules, and human rather than clock time.

It is important to note that all cultures are more complex than a small list of values and beliefs, and that no culture is thoroughly writer responsible or reader responsible. On the other hand, this framework is useful because the difference between writer responsibility and reader responsibility is not well-known. Further, connecting different writing strategies with cultural values and beliefs is an immensely helpful framework for beginning intercultural writers, who are often faced with the unenviable task of getting along in a new country and culture.

2

Deepest Dimensions of Culture

Chapter outline

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Overview

- describes deepest dimensions of culture
- examines uncertainty, social fabric, communication styles, application of rules, and time

Although studying culture is no easy task, research in the social sciences has attained varying degrees of success over the past two centuries. Some of this work has focused on how cultures use language, other research has focused on habits and rituals, and others still have studied the role of myth, story, and wisdom traditions. Each of these aspects of culture can be difficult to examine, which makes the use of a cultural metaphor somewhat complicated. While culture has been likened to many things in the natural world, one of the simplest is a pool of water.

The idea that culture is like a body of water is based on the notion that life on the surface is not only immediate but also impermanent. It is easy to see surface level matters but difficult to see that which is submerged. The main reason for this is that it simply takes time and effort to understand things outside of normal view.

Finding what is on the surface of culture is a fairly straightforward task. Music and food are perhaps the most obvious, since these aspects of culture are easily acquired the moment one enters a foreign culture. Visitors to South America are sometimes surprised that *cuy*, or guinea pig, is a tasty treat on the streets of Ecuador. Interesting as roasted rodent may be, it fails to provide any real insight into Ecuadorian life (although it plays a larger role in folk wisdom and medicine). Music is more or less the same. Music may be soothing, colorful, energizing, or enigmatic. Music has the power to transcend time and space, language and culture. Music can even release a shackled parkinsonian patient. But powerful as music may be, an Irish ballad or Argentine tango reveals only a small slice of its native lands. Such are the characteristics that reside on the surface of a simple pond.

Writers seeking to connect with readers from other parts of the globe must adopt or at least borrow different values and beliefs. While true understanding of the target audience is unlikely (culture is acquired early and seems to remain throughout one's lifetime), it is possible to temporarily suspend our natural instincts in the service of writing effective prose. But doing so requires going beyond the surface of culture by absorbing, if only for a moment, its deepest dimensions.

There are many cultural values from which to work, but five emerge as the most important—uncertainty, social relationships, communication, rules, and time. After obtaining a firm understanding of culture's deepest dimensions, we can then look at how these values influence writing.

2.1 Uncertainty

Uncertainty is a human universal characterized as the degree and extent that people attempt to avoid unknown situations. Although uncertainty avoidance and anxiety are related, it is important to note that uncertainty has no object. Anxiety is defined by its relation to an event or problem, and it may adversely influence the way people respond to uncertainty.

Before explaining uncertainty avoidance, it is crucial to point out individual variation in the way people respond to the unknown. Some people feel

Table 2.1 Primary differences between low and high uncertainty avoidance

Low uncertainty avoidance	High uncertainty avoidance
uncertainty normal	uncertainty a threat
emotions hidden	emotions vented
relative truths	one truth
scientific inquiry	grand theories
presumption of equality	people are unequal

comfortable and even energized by wrangling sharks and alligators while others are terrified by riding a bike. Despite individual variation in the way people cope with uncertainty, it is possible and even necessary to explain how such differences spread across an entire culture.

A country in the middle of a savage civil war, or one that endures a traumatic political shift, is more likely to express stronger aversion toward uncertainty than people from cultures that are relatively stable. Basically, if people have food, clothing, shelter, and reasonable access to health care, then their worries are less than just about anyone else on the planet. For the rest, uncertainty avoidance is a full time job, and it definitely spills over into writing.

Although most cultures occupy a mixture of both high and low uncertainty avoidance, polarizing these dimensions is helpful for seeing how they apply to writing (Table 2.1).

The unknown is not something to be feared for low uncertainty avoidance cultures. Rather, peering into the unknown may even be a positive sign because it reflects the potential for unveiling new concepts and ideas. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures are also known for sealing their emotions, adhering to the belief in relative truths, expressing strong interests in scientific knowledge, and aiming for equal status among its citizens.

Dealing with uncertainty is an exhausting fact of life for high uncertainty avoidance cultures. Peering over the precipice of new knowledge is not rewarded in high uncertainty environments. As a result, high uncertainty avoidance cultures encourage emotional expression, adhere to an underlying theoretical truth, subscribe to grand theories, and reinforce social hierarchies.

2.1.1 Avoiding the unknown

The unknown is a real threat to stability among moderately high uncertainty avoidance cultures. The unknown is mysterious and terrifying. Countries such

as Russia and Japan have good reason to be concerned with the future. For Russia, the Chechen war has caused modest but consistent amounts of domestic terrorism. Second, post-Soviet Russia has existed for only a short period of time. An immediate economic and political restructuring can often cause severe hardship on unprepared citizens. Literally overnight, some Russians were propelled to the top of the socioeconomic ladder while others were left to their own devices. Japan is not altogether different, which is a country that still bears the scars of a devastating war, both in its people and its landscape. Although Japan exemplifies one of the best kinds of success stories in recent history, having catapulted itself to the second most powerful economic system in the world, the memory of devastation remains.

2.1.2 Role of emotions

There is a tendency to conceal emotions among low uncertainty avoidance cultures. In the case of the United States, hidden emotions stem from the British “stiff upper lip.” This is why emotional venting in the workplace is usually considered a sign of trouble. Emotional expression is synonymous with personal flaws. This value is not widely shared among high uncertainty avoidance cultures, where emotions may be vented in a variety of personal and professional settings.

One story passed down through intercultural lore illustrates the difference between the relatively unemotional American and the expressive French. An American woman constantly felt that she was arguing or fighting with her French boyfriend. The more she tried to deflect tension or redirect the discussion, the more he expressed his interest through argument. And the more he raised his voice to animate a point, the more she withdrew and felt intimidated. Unfortunately, both misunderstood the other person’s goodwill. Because he admired her intellectual ability, she was encouraged to voice her opinion through what was interpreted as a highly charged argument. This kind of misunderstanding is common between people who come from environments with incompatible emotional rules.

2.1.3 Truth, or truths?

Another characteristic of low uncertainty avoidance is the tendency to believe in relative truths. Spiritual or religious traditions make for a good perspective on this value, since the belief in a higher power embodies the ultimate test of knowledge. Many low uncertainty avoidance people call themselves spiritual but not religious, pointing to an enigmatic substance like nature or the indescribable.

While one factor is that part of this value is rooted in the mistrust that many low uncertainty avoidance cultures have for hierarchical organizations like universities or the military, where status is granted largely by tenure, another factor is that no one religion can satisfy all individual beliefs.

Perhaps the best known publication on this subject is written by Simon Blackburn, a professor of philosophy at the University of Cambridge in England, a low uncertainty avoidance culture. Blackburn wrote a book titled *Truth*, which makes a nearly formulaic argument about the philosophy of knowledge. While there may be an underlying truth, or Truth, Blackburn asserts that there are equally viable positions that sometimes occupy opposite ends of the spectrum. Not to say that Blackburn is wrong, it nonetheless is the sort of doctrine one expects from a philosopher who leads a safe if not ordinary life.

Truths with a capital T are a fixture of high uncertainty avoidance cultures, and wisdom traditions are as good a place as any to illustrate this point. Many Eastern religions emphasize behavior over belief. For instance, it is entirely normal for one to be both a Buddhist and a Christian in the East, with little concern that these belief systems may conflict. India's Hinduism and Japan's Shintoism (ancient appeal to nature) address the holistic nature of desire and behavior. Although self-control and social cooperation are emphasized in all traditions, they are given critical status in the East. Eastern truth reflects the dynamic status of the universe, and people are as much a part of this process as any other plant or animal. This creates an emphasis on behavior and all-encompassing truth. Behavior gives way to belief in the West where, at least in many cultures, truth is relegated to a subjective or personal state.

Take the major Western religions—Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. All three of these religions use texts that, practitioners maintain, hold the essence of reality. While some people may interpret these texts in a metaphorical sense, they are still thought of as ancient volumes of wisdom and knowledge. They are the manuals of life.

In the East, texts have secondary importance. Buddhism's *Dhammapada* and Taoism's *Tao Te Ching* read more like maxims and proverbs, a list of memorable axioms for right behavior. While religious wisdom traditions provide a good perspective for understanding how cultures deal with the unknown, science is an even better area for understanding these ideas.

2.1.4 Scientific inquiry

Scientific inquiry is another characteristic of low uncertainty avoidance cultures. The scientific method requires a theory or hypothesis, a controlled experiment,

and an analysis to determine causal relationships. Everyone uses the scientific method, but only certain cultures are apt to repeatedly draw on the method for discovering new knowledge. One of the main reasons for this difference is found in uncertainty avoidance. Formulating a guess or hypothesis about how something behaves is equivalent to taking a risk. And because a hypothesis is about testing an idea against the meter of truth, scientists must prepare for their idea to be wrong. Science is the pursuit of truth in face of uncertainty.

High uncertainty avoidance cultures tend to be less empirical. As a result, uncertainty leads to a different perspective for learning about the world, an approach often leading toward a grand theory. One reason for preferring theory over practice is that it eliminates the need to deal with the messy world of verifiable research. Many of us know the inconvenience of having to revise an opinion of how something works, and empirical evidence is often the main instrument toward this end. But if people traffic in the world of ideas without the risk of being proven wrong, then this can provide a measure of certainty in an unpredictable world.

Not surprisingly, many of the world's great theorists come from cultures that are known for their high uncertainty avoidance. Nietzsche's ultimate Overman, who triumphs over a "herd mentality" to see the Truth, probably emanates from the uncertainty of German life at the time. Quantum mechanics is a subdiscipline within physics about the unpredictability of subatomic particles. And when Einstein began thinking seriously about quantum mechanics, he famously said that "God does not play dice." A Jewish Einstein must have felt uncertain in his environment, which contrasts with the Danish physicist Niels Bohr and his perspective on the subatomic: "Your theory is crazy, but it is not crazy enough to be true."

2.1.5 Equality and inequality

The last characteristic to be examined for uncertainty avoidance is the presumption of equality. The guiding principle of equality is based on the ideal that people are born with the same abilities as any other person. This kind of thinking makes it easy to assume that people are more or less the same, with identical goals, aptitudes, and aspirations. Despite several problems with how these ideas conflict with reality, the belief finds a natural home among low uncertainty cultures. And one of the best ways to illustrate ideals of equality is at school.

In low uncertainty avoidance cultures, students usually feel comfortable suggesting an idea to a teacher. Although all people feel some need of conforming

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to the opinion of authorities, students from low uncertainty cultures are more or less comfortable offering unsolicited advice to their instructors. In fact, a teacher who actively seeks feedback from her students has a good chance of being accepted by the class. No higher compliment can be paid to a teacher than to be said that “she is just like one of us.” Although this value seems entirely natural among low uncertainty avoidance cultures, it is a foreign concept in high uncertainty avoidance cultures.

Inequality is often associated with high uncertainty avoidance cultures. Although it can be difficult for some cultures to grasp, the concept of equality and flattened hierarchies is not a universal value. Equality is not even desired in some countries and cultures, which is not as strange as it first sounds. Part of this value stems from a relief of uncertainty. A student can never be told that her work is inadequate if she is given a precise set of instructions. Under these circumstances, if something goes wrong with a project then the responsibility goes to the teacher who provided the instructions. While it may seem counter-intuitive, employees in some cultures really do prefer to have a clear hierarchy, at least in matters of uncertainty.

A student who craves certainty, but fails to receive detailed instructions for completing an assignment, is likely to feel as though she is susceptible to failure. The best way for an uncertain student to feel confident about a task is to be given specific directions, which is different from what is seen as good teaching in low uncertainty cultures. The mark of a good low uncertainty avoidance teacher is to be supportive but unobtrusive. Teachers who scrutinize students are likely to be resented, and the best assignment is one with flexibility and creative freedom.

2.2 Social relationships

Social relationships are a way of describing interpersonal affairs ranging from individual to collective identities. All people are individuals, and all people have a connection with a social network (Table 2.2).

Individualistic cultures encourage more personal freedom while collectivist cultures encourage harmony and solidarity. This is not to say that individualistic cultures lack a social fabric. Rather, individualistic cultures promote greater distance between individuals and the larger social network. One topic is especially useful when talking about social fabric—the ritual of food.

Among individualistic cultures, the otherwise ceremonial aspect of eating is often reduced to screaming through a plastic clown, driving around the

Table 2.2 Primary differences between individualism and collectivism

Individualism	Collectivism
personal language	group language
personal time	group time
individual resources	shared resources
personal freedom	freedom in groups
how to learn	what to learn
authority contested	authority respected
argumentative, persuasive	harmony

corner, and exchanging money for food through a small window. It is quick and inexpensive, which provides time for doing other things throughout the day. Fast food aside, the ritual of food among individualistic cultures tends toward the solitary. Contrary to some cultures, individualistic families do not eat from the same plate, often help themselves to dinner, and minimize ceremony. Further, eating together as a family is increasingly uncommon in individualistic cultures, which partly reflects a desire to squeeze as many different activities into a single day. An interesting contrast can even be found in Africa.

Many of the foods in Ethiopia are common global cuisine: chicken, beef, vegetables, bread (albeit fermented), lamb, salad, and stew. Although the menu seems ordinary, food is served in a rather different manner. Instead of individual plates served to each person at a table, all of the food is served in a single *mesab*, or large hourglass dish. The *mesab* is lined with *injera*, or fermented bread, which is covered by the rest of the meal. Everyone eats by tearing pieces of *injera*, which is then used to grab meat and vegetables. An Ethiopian meal is also distinguished by the fact that everyone eats from the same dish. This is an example of a collective eating, one that is unfamiliar to most people from more individualistic cultures.

2.2.1 People and language

People from individualistic backgrounds are often surprised to learn when cultures have words for individualism that, even when used in a nonpejorative manner, carry negative connotations. Take the Russian collective or communal spirit, captured in the word *sobornost*. While individualism is seen as a characteristic of competition, *sobornost* reflects a long and significant dimension of

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Russian life. Planting, harvesting, and personal safety were more readily secured when everyone contributed to these efforts.

The extended family in prehistoric Russian life is known as *zadruga*, which refers to the clan or larger family unit. Individual families who lived in small huts or hamlets, would be built next to each other in areas known as a *mir*. A mir was the equivalent of a town or village today, responsible for resolving a variety of family and legal disputes. The word mir has a wide range of meanings, including village commune, world, and peace. The Russian space station was aptly named Mir to signify its social importance. But Russian is not the only language to reveal its innermost workings, ideas of which are easily found in China and Japan.

Two words are particularly useful for understanding Chinese social fabric, *guanxi* and *gerenzhuyi*. Guanxi has no direct equivalent in English, but may be roughly translated as relationship, connection, obligation, and dependency. Chinese *guanxi* refers to several variations of personal interaction, ranging from collegial intimacy, personal and professional connection, and in-group relations. The notion of *guanxi* may be remarkably strong in Chinese culture, and often meets individualistic people with some surprise. For instance, *guanxi* is primarily responsible for the Chinese belief that letters of recommendation automatically result in jobs or admittance into academic programs. People with more individualistic social conventions may be surprised by the importance of *guanxi* in Chinese thought, but few concepts are more shocking than *gerenzhuyi*.

Gerenzhuyi is roughly translated as individualism, selfishness, and “one person doctrine.” All of these associations have strong pejorative meanings, and anyone unfortunate enough to receive the *gerenzhuyi* label is likely to bare its troubled implications. The indignation of individualism may come as a surprise in many English-speaking countries, where ideas of personal uniqueness are pushed to the limit. Identity, personal opinion, and self-promotion are all facets of American life. Contrary to the principle of *gerenzhuyi*, a loose social fabric results in greater self-expression, a tendency for argumentation, and an affinity for skepticism. Aspirations for social harmony, or *guanxi*, are often foreign to people from *gerenzhuyi* cultures. Japan offers a similar comparison.

It can be said that a collective orientation results in a kind of group consciousness that, in Japan, goes by one of two names—*uchi* and *soto*. While people from individualistic cultures may interpret both words as indicating some degree of distance, *uchi* roughly means “insiders” while *soto* translates

as “outsiders.” The word *uchi* has two major definitions, one indicating very close connections and a second with slightly less social connection. For instance, the interpretation of *uchi* refers to people who share close connections across long periods of time. The second meaning of *uchi* refers to the general category of acquaintances—friends, family, in-laws, classmates, and distant relatives. The second class of *uchi* indicates a close degree of intimacy, but of greater distance than a spouse or parent. The term *soto* is used for all other people, a general classification for contacts outside the circle of trust, such as people encountered in business. These three categories—two for *uchi* and one for *soto*—make up the social consciousness of the Japanese mind, all of which speak toward a collective social fabric.

2.2.2 Personal time

Personal time is one of the most obvious characteristics of individualistic cultures, who are accustomed to having considerable time alone. Part of this is reflected in the manner in which individualistic parents raise their children, which is to be self-reliant at an early age. Individualistic children are often taught to think for themselves, encouraged to solve their own problems, and given tremendous flexibility in many aspects of their development.

Much of this independence is acquired during adolescence and cultivated into early adulthood, which is why it affects everything from personal and family relationships, career and professional aspirations, and even the mundane nature of working in groups. Although group work can be found around the world, it takes on a unique perspective in individualistic cultures. Instead of everyone working toward the completion of an entire project to its end, individualistic team members are accustomed to completing their own set of tasks and then cobbling their work together in the very end.

Individual time gives way to groupthink in collective cultures, where identity is strongly tied to group values. Part of this stems from economics and lifestyle, where home life typically involves numerous people living in fairly small environments. Rooms are often shared by several people in collective cultures. And since bedrooms usually lack a radio or television, everyone meets in the living room to listen to their favorite music or watch the most popular programs. An emphasis on group time also speaks to the time when young adults leave home.

In individualistic cultures, many people know from an early age that they are to become self-reliant as soon as possible. This usually means leaving the

house after graduating high school, a significant developmental milestone. Leaving home at such a young age is unusual in many parts of the world, where young adults are expected to stay until they are ready to leave. On the other end of the spectrum, parents from collective cultures often find it difficult to understand how parents in individualistic cultures can send their children into the world too soon, a fact that seems terrifying in the face of enormous uncertainty. This concept is more or less absent in Japan, where the phrase “leaving home” simply means a son has decided to enter the monastic life.

2.2.3 Available resources

There are many reasons why some cultures are individualistic, but it is partially explained through a strong economic system. More resources afford greater independence. Individualism is unusual among the world’s cultures, and part of the reason for its minority status has to do with abundant resources. When compared within a global framework, individualistic cultures consume more resources than any other country in the world, which creates an environment that promotes individualism. In many societies, acquiring the items for sustaining life—food, water, shelter—often requires agreement between people in agriculture and animal domestication.

Consider nomadic tribes living in the Mongolian Steppe. When the Chinese government provided money to nomadic Mongols, which was used to purchase items such as motorcycles and radios, members of the group became more self-reliant. The more resources any given individual may have to secure her future, the more likely she is to break out on her own—or so the theory goes. This is why the best way to get a group of independent minded people working together is to start from scratch, making sure everyone feels equal to everyone else.

2.2.4 Concept of freedom

Freedom is another component of the individualist psyche, and examples are abundant in both Australia and the United States. The concept of self-reliance is nearly mythic in American culture, where people are expected to “pull themselves up by their bootstraps.” Many of the traits that encourage American individualism stem from the self-selection process that began with the English in the seventeenth century.

People who traveled to North America did so in the face of enormous uncertainty, which required travel over distant waters into an unknown situation

with few resources at hand. This modern history created the foundation for individualism, which often involved leaving family in Western Europe. Desire for freedom was the overarching characteristic of the era, which continues to this day. Even now, Americans are wholly resistant to public monitoring, although such measures are standard in some parts of the world. While Americans readily accept that freedom is the only thing in life worth living for, New Hampshire's state motto speaks for itself: Live Free or Die.

The concept of American freedom is unknown in many parts of the world, where the main pressure rests on conforming to the group rather than constructing an individual identity. Both China and Japan have at times closed its doors to outside influence, either through restricted trade or, more recently, censoring of information technology and media. This social characteristic is sometimes called in-group behavior, and it has an interesting relationship with how young men select their occupations.

Among collective cultures, young men are much more likely to follow the career path of their father. If the father is an auto worker then his son is probably going to be an auto worker as well. This differs from the out-group pattern of individualistic cultures where young men often pursue careers quite different from their father's. If the father is a physician, there is a good chance his son will do something closer to manual labor.

2.2.5 Learning orientation

Although learning aptitude and ability vary across individuals, the process of acquiring knowledge differs across cultures. One of the primary distinctions in individualistic education is teaching students how to learn instead of what to learn. American educators do not normally view students as passive receptacles waiting to be filled. Rather, individualistic students are taught the learning process, which includes analysis, logic, and tools for deriving new and innovative solutions. The student is given a conceptual toolbox to take into the world, which provides the means for lifelong learning. Teaching students how to learn also reflects individual values since it places the responsibility of acquiring new knowledge onto the student. The toolbox method of learning is roughly equivalent to teaching a student to fish rather than giving him a fish.

Learning styles among collective cultures tend to be more about what to learn. Education in collective cultures, for instance, usually occurs through memorization. Although writer responsible cultures often think of learning as a lifelong process, the educational system in collective cultures is more about

downloading information into students. The mark of academic excellence among collective cultures include not only high test scores but also quoting notable historical figures. Referencing ancient wisdom is not only a sign of academic talent but also an affirmation of authority.

2.2.6 Relationship with authority

Another aspect of the individualistic learning process is a tendency to challenge teachers. Each semester, teachers in individualistic cultures are accustomed to having a student or two who is eager to counter an idea or concept. The challenge is rarely personal, and may even be unrelated to finding the correct answer. Rather, most of these disputes are an attempt to prove analytical thinking. If a student approaches the subject with a critical eye then a teacher is likely to assume she is a good student, a sign of individual thinking. But challenging teachers has another aspect, and that is the drive to dispute authority.

Although individualistic students are usually not disrespectful, many are resistant to direct orders. There are countless tales in which a teacher makes a claim that students find unbelievable, a problem remedied only by the persuasive appeal of the instructor. Unless a teacher is unusually fearsome, students are apt to question their teachers at face value. Only claims with sufficient proof are considered viable, so a teacher is not credible simply by experience or education alone—it must be earned.

This contrasts with the collective relationship to authority, which is generally deferential. Authority figures such as teachers are rarely questioned, which would likely result in a severe reprimand. Teachers are seen as wise gurus who deserve respect and admiration. This is easily captured in the Chinese concept of *jiashu yüren*, which roughly translates to “teach and educate.” *Jiashu* reflects the general task of instruction. *Yüren* embodies a deeper relationship between teacher and student, a concept that brings a method for how to live (the *yü* in *yüren* means nurture).

Similarly, students from collective cultures expect teachers to deliver lectures, and it is unusual for students to debate a topic with an instructor. Foreign instructors teaching for the first time in American universities are often surprised and even unsettled by the interactive nature of their new students. Such instructors are initially troubled when their authority is questioned, which may be misinterpreted as rude or naïve. Although a student may be rude, the more likely scenario is one in which she is simply trying to prove her merit as a critical thinker.

2.2.7 Harmony and persuasion

The difference between harmony and persuasion is the final aspect of social fabric to be examined, but it is also one of the most important. Persuasion is mainly concerned with finding all available means of argumentation while harmony is based on respect for the group.

A large need for personal time, abundant resources, a strong sense of personal freedom, aggressive learning style, and a general rejection of authority all contribute toward the need to persuade. If your audience is independent, individualistic, and resistant to authority, then one of the only options remaining for convincing your reader is through persuasion. The use of examples, incentives, or even hints of failure all contribute to the persuasive moment. The individualistic lawyer is a steward of sales for the legal profession, which is why there are a disproportionate number of lawyers in the United States as compared to Japan, which encourages interpersonal harmony.

Harmony is mostly concerned with accommodating apparently opposite values and beliefs, both the yin and the yang. Unlike individualistic persuasive cultures, harmonious groups tend to think of polar opposites as unified: good/evil, black/white, positive/negative, on/off. Good cannot exist without evil and the positive is always accompanied by the negative. In fact, collective cultures generally do not think of harmony unless it contains opposite values, as illustrated in this verse from the *Tao Te Ching*: “Long and short define each other; high and low depend on each other; before and after follow each other.” The concept of harmony is pervasive throughout much of the world, especially in the East, and is nearly always linked to collective cultures.

2.3 Communication

Many people have heard of the old adage that most of communication is nonverbal. The idea is that people can tell more about what someone is saying, or how she is saying it, by watching her mannerisms rather than listening only to words. While nonverbal communication is clearly important, cultures go about the process of exchanging information in very different ways. When studying how cultures communicate, one way to assess its effectiveness is through a contextual continuum. Along this continuum are two values, high and low context.

High context patterns refer to communication emphasizing external signals, including mannerisms, eye movement, and touch. High context information tends to be flowery, ornate, and descriptive. Low context communication is the

Table 2.3 Primary differences between low context and high context communication

Low context	High context
explicit communication	implicit communication
language effective	language ineffective
common law legal tradition	civil law legal tradition

opposite because it focuses on the explicit message through precision and content. Low context information tends to be clear and concise (Table 2.3).

One method for explaining differences in communication context are through the analogy of copying an audio file. An analog audio clip recorded and copied through a tape cassette yields increasingly distorted files through the introduction of noise or artifacts. Because the fidelity of analog tapes is second rate, it is impossible to reproduce a final copy with the same quality as the original. But if we use a digital audio clip copied through a digital recorder, we can more or less be sure that the quality of the last copy is the same as the original. The reason is that digital copiers are capable of retaining the fidelity of the original while minimizing the introduction of artifacts. The use of language is similar to analog and digital audio files. Individualistic cultures use language in a digital fashion while collective cultures use language in an analog fashion. The difference is not confined to language itself but the manner in which language is used.

Low context cultures use the equivalent of high quality digital files, which means that nearly anyone can jump into the conversation. An example of an implicit characteristic of low content languages is found in English, which is a nontonal language. That is, the meaning of most words is not normally based on the tone or sing-song quality of the language. Tonality is more likely to be associated with high context cultures.

High context cultures, on the other hand, use a version of analog files, which means that successfully entering a conversation requires additional context. High context communicators navigate a complex world of information where the circumstance of the message, plus any nonverbal signals, greatly influences meaning. High context communication is usually in direct contrast to low context communication strategies—clarity, concision, and directness. Each of these characteristics is prized among low context communicators but is foreign in high context cultures.

2.3.1 Explicit and implicit

Although individualistic communicators are taught at an early age to be explicit and direct, this characteristic is not widely shared around the world. The explicit transfer of information best describes low context communication. People from low context cultures believe in the power of language. Low context writers strongly believe in the ability of language to convey a thought to another person. This assumption is powerful enough that, if and when communication fails, the responsibility falls squarely on the shoulders of the writer. Any writer responsible author who does not follow this creed is likely to get into some trouble.

The goal of low context communication is to focus on content, which reinforces a direct exchange of ideas. Because language is thought to be highly effective, the delivery focuses on eliminating unnecessary details and context. Further, low context communication avoids straying from the original topic by supporting the main idea with numerous sources of evidence. Explicit forms of communication occur for various reasons, but generally surface among cultures with a strong economic base, diverse population, and an individualistic orientation. People from high context cultures are likely to perceive low context writing as simple, direct, and even rude.

High context communication brings different goals to communication. The spirit of high context communication is a detailed and even ornate delivery. Language may be mistrusted among high context communicators, which is why additional information is brought to the task. High context communication emphasizes the main point by emphasizing details, which occurs because everyone is from the same collective group. Implicit forms of communication occur for various reasons but generally surface among cultures with a weakened economic base, homogeneous population, and a harmonizing orientation. People from low context cultures perceive high context patterns as unnecessarily complex and indirect.

2.3.2 Power of language

Language is a tool for communication, and it has provided generations of people an evolutionary advantage that enhances the ability to navigate complex social networks. Although the origins of language may be pragmatic, nothing stops people from using language in a creative manner. Despite the global appeal of language as an aesthetic instrument, many cultures have a pragmatic relationship with words.

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Language also has the power to reflect characteristics of social relationships, and nothing exemplifies the self like a personal pronoun. Consider the use of the pronoun 'I'. Among the most individualistic cultures—as found in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia—a person's native language is normally English. Unsurprisingly, English seems to use the personal pronoun 'I' more frequently than most languages, as it is dropped from the syntax in some languages such as Chinese. It makes sense when a culture that values individual identity and personal opinions relies on a higher rate of personal pronouns, giving language a unique power. This does not mean that language structures thought. Instead, more frequent uses of personal pronouns reflect the speaker's individualistic values. On the other end of the spectrum is a more aesthetic relationship with language.

Japanese papers tend to percolate, or so it seems. Thesis statements are absent in Japanese writing, or so delayed as to seem ineffective. And this is precisely the difference in the power of language. In Japan, writers assume that the reader understands the main thrust of an argument. Instead, a Japanese writer's duty is to provide detail and context. It is not uncommon for Japanese writers to begin papers with substantial historical context. This is because high context writers assume that history is always important.

The power of language in Japan is also found in its silence. Japanese silence, or *chinmoku*, is not simply the space between words. Instead, *chinmoku* is an invaluable skill in its own right. One reason for the prevalence of silence in Japanese communication is based on the concept of *haragei*, which means mutual understanding. *Haragei* is a natural value among high context and collective cultures. One of the binding characteristics of collective cultures is a shared understanding of how the world works, which translates into many common assumptions. An analogy may be found in an elderly couple who, having spent the majority of their life together, find little need for conversation. Because they each know what the other is thinking, their time is enjoyed by simply being in the presence of their companion. The same may be said of *haragei*.

It is often assumed that the Japanese wisdom tradition also reflects the relationship between functionality and beauty. The zen riddle or *koan* is a good example: What is the sound of one hand clapping? The phrase seems nonsensical to many people who think it is little more than a mystical form of logic. Although most Japanese are not practitioners of zen, it is often assumed that zen's values are also the values of Japan. Zen is a perplexing tradition bent on battling irresistible paradoxes, bizarre conclusions, and shameless non sequiturs. And this is precisely the point. In Japan, there is little faith in the

power of language. Words are merely one way to communicate information, which elevates the importance of context. Everyone in Japan knows the menu is not the meal.

A final note should be issued about language and literature. One of the reasons poetry is unpopular among low context cultures is that language is viewed as a practical device for communication. Poetry is popular among cultures that have an aesthetic relationship with words. High context communication students typically memorize notable verse in countries where language is not merely an instrument. Bashō in Japan, Pushkin in Russia, and Rumi in Iran are all highly respected poets in their respective cultures.

2.3.3 Legal traditions

Like wisdom or religious traditions, there are also differences in legal systems. And two legal traditions that are frequently compared include common law and civil law. Both the United States and Australia adhere to common law, which has its roots in England. Common law traditions are often associated with higher degrees of individualism, low uncertainty avoidance, a universal application of standards, and linear conceptions of time. Both Russia and Japan adhere to the use of the civil law tradition, which has its roots in Roman law and Justinian I, one of the most historically significant rulers of the Byzantine Empire (ca. 483–565). Civil law traditions are frequently associated with lower degrees of individualism, high uncertainty avoidance, a particular application of standards, and nonlinear conceptions of time.

The common law system is based on cases that arise from rulings of precedence. Deciding on a case largely depends on past rulings of similar cases. Common law traditions are considered analytical and flexible. While cases are regularly determined by past rulings, most legal codes are intentionally vague to accommodate unforeseen factors. This legal elbow room is provided because no two cases are alike, and ambiguity within the codes is a necessary feature for maintaining precedence. The ambiguity of common law codes is similar to the final section or conclusion of a large amount of writing that comes from high context cultures. Many common law societies are accustomed to offering a main argument, supporting that argument with various sources of evidence, and offering the reader a firm but open summary. An author from a common law tradition may write a book trying to convince you that some aspects of human behavior are innate, but the conclusion will be written in such a way that it leaves the decision to the reader.

Civil law is based on very specific codes that have been painstakingly crafted to handle nearly any legal problem. Unlike common law, which decides cases

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based on precedence, civil law usually draws on a specific code to determine an outcome. Civil law traditions are also considered deductive and narrative. Although common law uses deduction to arrive at a decision, narration is its greatest asset. Cases are determined by implementing precise and detailed codes. Civil law traditions leave little room for interpretation, which means a judge has a reduced role in the case. Many common law societies are accustomed to avoiding or delaying a thesis or main argument by focusing on additional facts and details that some readers consider irrelevant. Conclusions for high context and civil law societies are often specific and definitive, leaving little room for interpretation. If an author writes a book about innate human behaviors for a high context audience, she will not leave an uncertain or ambiguous conclusion. The writer tells the reader how to think about a problem.

2.4 Rules

All cultures adhere to principles and rules that are used to guide behavior through codes of conduct. Some cultures are apt to apply rules across the whole of society while other cultures may focus on specific applications. Universalist cultures attempt to apply principles equally to each person whereas particularist cultures aim to apply the same principles to specific people (Table 2.4).

Universalist cultures idealize rules by applying them across an entire group. Rules are based on what is true and moral, which apply equally well to individuals. Perhaps the most peculiar aspect of universalism is that, despite the fact that a group is made up of individuals with unique traits, standards are applied to everyone without exception. Universalist cultures tend to focus on rules and exclusive personal and professional relationships, and generally aim for broad application.

Table 2.4 Differences between universalism and particularism

Universal	Particular
equality	hierarchy
practical	theoretical
achievement	ascriptive

Particularist cultures emphasize personal relationships and trust through building strong social networks. Particularist cultures also depend on contextualization for advancing knowledge. The application of principles and rules in particularist cultures tend to be specific for a given context. Personal status, social position, and professional connections are important factors in the ruling of particularist dilemmas.

Universalism and particularism roughly correspond with other values. Universalist cultures tend to be individualistic whereas collective cultures are particularistic. While universalist cultures tend to believe that rules apply to everyone, particularist cultures apply rules to specific situations.

2.4.1 Power distance

Although power distance is a dimension of culture worth examining on its own, it is used here as a secondary trait within the application of procedures and rules. This has been done for two reasons. First, power distance is connected with legal traditions. And second, power distance is directly related to how people get things done.

Inequality is a factor in all societies, but some people are clearly considered more equal than others. In any given situation, there is always someone who is stronger, faster, or more intelligent. And while individual people have different innate abilities, cultural differences are partly measured in power distance. If a student feels comfortable taking new suggestions and ideas to a teacher then she is probably from a low power distance culture. But if a student feels uncomfortable about offering suggestions to a teacher then she is probably from a high power distance culture. While social position and power distance is an ordinary part of life (even microorganisms develop hierarchies), some cultures attempt to flatten or eliminate this natural value.

Low power distance implies that hierarchical relationships are relatively flat. Whether it is a student challenging a teacher or a copilot correcting a captain, the question of power is always relevant. But in low power distance cultures, in which people more or less behave as if they occupy the same plane of status, influence is a two-way continuum.

Coupled with an informal communication style, low power distance cultures are also likely to be perceived as confrontational. This is not to say that low power distance writers are rude, but that the preferred method for exchanging information is somewhat pragmatic. At the root of the pragmatic mind is a need to solve problems, which requires getting at its source. Meeting a problem head-on requires getting all of the facts, and there is no better way to do

this than to face someone directly. A desire for directness, facts, and solutions is so strong that when people from low power distance cultures speak with someone who does not make eye contact, the tendency is to believe they are untrustworthy, inept, or mischievous.

High power distance refers to the influence that a superior or authority has over a subordinate. Students in high power distance cultures rarely feel comfortable questioning a teacher or authority figure. High power distance education, for example, is a good model of how people adhere to status markers rather than signs of achievement or personal accomplishment. Equality is not presumed in a high power distance culture. In fact, the presumption of equality known in many universalist cultures is a foreign idea in many places around the world.

Communication styles among high power distance cultures are also important since conformity to the group is encouraged. The perception of the confrontational style associated with universalism gives way in high power distance cultures. The emphasis is less on solving problems and more on establishing similarities. The goal of a high power distance classroom is not to center instruction on the student, but to make sure everyone retains information. The use of facts and direct language are seen as potentially confrontational in particularist cultures, and is especially conducive to losing “face.”

Everyone is concerned with face, which is roughly defined as the way people present themselves to other people. Despite the universal concern for face, it is especially important among particularist and high power distance cultures. The concern for face arises for several reasons, but one of the most important is reflected in limited social and geographic mobility. Social cooperation is exceedingly important among cultures in which people expect to spend their entire lives in the same place they were born. If relocation is not an option, then it is usually in your best interest to find ways of accommodating the needs of others.

Historical context is a second reason for why face may be important, especially among particularist cultures. Confucius, China’s famous humanist scholar, stressed that people are social creatures constantly navigating the social realities of unequal relationships. The notion of face among particularist cultures has more to do with protecting the image of the person you are speaking with, whereas universalist cultures are usually more concerned with protecting themselves. Presumptions of equality and individual identity easily translate to preserving face, while a natural assumption for social hierarchies readily translates into saving another person’s face.

The Chinese word *li* nicely captures this thought, which means “right conduct in maintaining one’s place in the hierarchical order.” Instead of abusing status, which is the assumption of many people from more universalistic cultures, particularist people bear the responsibility of protecting other people’s social position. A Chinese proverb drives home this point: “A person needs face as a tree needs bark.”

2.4.2 Practical and theoretical

Another useful distinction between universalist and particularist cultures is the difference between practice and theory. Practice emphasizes tangible results, sometimes to the complete dismissal of the big ideas behind a solution. Theory, on the other hand, is concerned with ideal concepts as they relate to reality. Practitioners have little tolerance for concepts that belong in the clouds, and theoreticians believe that practical implementation is ordinary or mundane. The truth, however, is that both speak to each other. And while all cultures construct big ideas and practical solutions, there is often a preference for one over the other.

Theoretical pursuits are common among particularist cultures, which is frequently associated with high uncertainty. High uncertainty avoidance cultures are also more likely to spend time with big ideas rather than practical application. This is explained by the principle of verification, which asserts that any particular claim may be rendered true only when supported by multiple, externally valid, and replicated research. Verification is often impossible when working with grand concepts, or is proven or disproved long after the theorist has finished their work. Some of history’s most famous ideas (and some blunders) have come from thinkers in high uncertainty avoidance cultures. On the other end of the spectrum is relentless application.

Low uncertainty avoidance cultures, also frequently universalist cultures, have a strong tendency for empirical and verifiable research. It is common for writers in low uncertainty avoidance cultures to have a nearly fanatical interest in application, much to the dismissal of abstract ideas. This is certainly true in undergraduate programs among individualistic cultures in which students suffer through two years of general education requirements, often with the assumption that time and money have been wasted. The reward comes after reaching courses in which substantive work can be done, as with chemistry and computer science. One of the reasons low uncertainty cultures drive for practical application is that the risk of testing results is small if not unimportant.

2.4.3 Achievement and ascription

One of the stronger correlations associated with principles and rules are the differences between achievement and ascription. Achievement gives material meaning to completed tasks and is often measured through statistics, technology, and science. Ascription refers to status based on secondary attributes such as family surname and geographic location, and normally do not reflect the implementation of new ideas or tangible results.

Achievement orientation is associated with many cultural dimensions such as low uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and low context communication. Obtaining tangible results is perhaps the single greatest indicator of success in American culture. Since everyone is presumed to be more or less equal, and born with the same innate drives and abilities (or so it is believed), individual achievement is usually attributed to internal factors. The environment is perceived as something that can be mastered, as illustrated in the well-known maxim “mind over matter.”

Competition is the primary means for attaining status in achievement cultures. Many achievement-oriented cultures consider a competitive drive to be a central feature of a strong economic force. A potential problem of a strong competitive drive is that one can get so lost in pursuing a task that it is easy to lose sight of the original problem. This is to some extent based on the Protestant work ethic—where there is a will there is a way—which can lead to numerous errors, especially when context or details are necessary to fully understand a problem.

Tangible results are also a key feature of achievement orientation. Students, for instance, usually require evidence that their time has been well spent, which often means proof by way of a new skill. At the very least, there has to be a promise of acquiring something new that will benefit a project or organization. Perhaps no better example of tangible results is found in the drive for statistical evidence.

Americans perceive numbers and statistics as the most convincing kind of verification, despite the fact that rational and analytical procedures have obvious limitations. Nonetheless, one of the guiding principles toward practical knowledge is quantification, statistical analysis, and rapid heuristics for making decisions. Popular examples of the American tendency toward quantification is found among garden variety top ten lists (biggest, best, most, fastest, efficient). It is for these reasons that quantitative research continues to occupy higher status among research methodologies, despite the advantages of qualitative research for solving certain kinds of problems.

Ascription is quite different from achievement and is often associated with high uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, and high context communication. Instead of focusing on individual accomplishments, ascriptive cultures tend to encourage conformity, affiliation with groups, and strong family bonds. Ascriptive cultures are associated with high power distance, which means that inequality is the norm. Success is not based on individual achievement, but on social markers such as family surname. Ascriptive cultures are certainly competitive, but success is not based on self-enhancement. Instead, ascriptive cultures tend to lift personal status within the group through professional connection. Characteristics associated with achievement-oriented cultures are largely absent among ascriptive people. Nonetheless, certain behaviors are likely to be confusing when parties from each culture are asked to cooperate.

Research is also quite different among ascriptive cultures. Unlike achievement-oriented cultures—which constantly demonstrate innovation through breakthroughs in technology and science—ascriptive cultures are much more likely to traffic in theory, unstructured observation, and qualitative research. Instead of looking at independent variables (a variable that is modified to measure its effect on an observed phenomenon), ascriptive cultures are apt to construct big ideas.

2.5 Time

Time is the most difficult and enigmatic characteristic of culture to grasp. Some cultures adhere to rigid standards of time, which means punctuality is of the essence. Other cultures have relaxed relationships with time in which people are more important than clocks. And through this continuum are two distinct ways of thinking about cultural relationships with time—monochronic and polychronic (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5 Primary differences between monochronic and polychronic orientation

Monochronic	Polychronic
linear	nonlinear
clock-oriented	people-oriented
short-term orientation	long-term orientation
precision	flow

Monochronic cultures are based primarily on clock time whereas polychronic cultures are based on people time. Both orientations toward time have several interesting characteristics. Monochronic cultures follow a more or less linear chain of events, which means that tasks are completed in a sequential fashion. For any two points *AB*, instance *A* must begin and end prior to instance *B*. The tendency among monochronic cultures is to consider one task or entity at a time.

Polychronic orientation follows a nonlinear sequence in which numerous possibilities are presented. For any two points *AB*, *A* is not necessarily required to finish prior to *B*. Polychronic orientation reflects flux and nonlinearity. The tendency from a monochronic perspective is to view polychronic time as random and even chaotic, but this is an unfortunate misconception.

2.5.1 Monochronic

Monochronic cultures are oriented toward clock time in which “time is of the essence.” In monochronic cultures, public clocks are usually more accurate, government employees quicker to complete tasks, and public transportation more punctual. Another aspect of clock-oriented cultures is punctuality. Being on time in monochronic cultures may mean being five minutes early or, at the very least, precisely on time. Clock-oriented cultures place such an important emphasis on time that it often results in shuffling someone out of an office to make sure another person can be brought in for an appointment. Under these circumstances, there is absolutely no offense in being whisked away by the clock. And if erring on the side of caution, it is always best to build in extra time for completing a project. Failing to provide a deliverable on time is more or less chalked up to incompetence. The nuances of monochronic cultures are easily captured in an example at an outdoor market.

Outdoor markets are found in most places around the world. The so-called farmer’s market, common throughout North America, is equivalent to traditional markets found in many other cultures. The products are produce, fresh fruits and vegetables shipped in from neighboring growers. The objective is to purchase locally grown nutritious foods at a reasonable price, although it serves equally well as a place to socialize. But the interesting aspect of outdoor markets is the manner in which people line up for purchases. It is common among monochronic cultures for people to line up in a linear fashion, usually on a first-come first-serve basis. There is no appearance of randomness, or of serving whoever happens to be the first to squeeze their way to the front of the line. Similar patterns of time are found at airports, grocers, and schools, or any

place in which groups of people converge. All of these queuing patterns reflect monochronic orientations toward time.

2.5.2 Polychronic

Polychronic cultures are oriented toward people instead of clocks. Being on time in polychronic cultures is different from monochronic cultures, since tardiness is often expected. It is entirely normal in polychronic cultures to be late for appointments. And in the case of some countries in Africa and South America, being on time may simply mean showing up within a couple of hours of the target time. People-oriented cultures are unlikely to shuffle visitors away because of a scheduled appointment. The notion of being whisked away is potentially offensive because it reduces the person to something less important than a clock point within the day. Similarly, projects and deliverables are not held to strict timetables. A late project does not indicate incompetence and may even reflect a desire to go above and beyond basic requirements.

Outdoor markets among many of the world's polychronic cultures are inclined to serve those who are first to reach the front of the line. This means that structured linear lines are more or less absent in polychronic markets. The pace seems frenetic, the process unfair, and the overall picture one of ensuing chaos. Such a perspective is most vivid to people from monochronic cultures. But polychronic markets are not unorganized. In fact, they operate rather effectively for people with a fluid sense of time.

3

Language and Culture

Chapter Outline

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Overview

- connects language, culture, and thought
- examines clarity, emotion, and writing

Language is a vehicle for communication. While language has the power to transform the mundane into the magnificent, it also fails in unexpected ways. One of the reasons for miscommunication is culture itself, the core values and beliefs one brings to the task. Some people value clarity and concision while other people value fancy formality. Personal differences account for some errors in communication, but deeper values are often at the heart of its misfiring across cultures.

The goal of this chapter is to connect the role of language with culture, thereby providing a deeper sense of how and why cultures communicate in their particular patterns. A brief and incomplete visit will be paid to language and thought, an area of contention for well over the past century. Some people feel that language structures thought while others believe that thought and language are disconnected. A great majority of people, however, feel that some interplay between language and culture is most realistic.

The next section addresses attitudes toward language. Again, individual differences surface when discussing clear communication. But equally compelling are the differences and explanations into why culture matters with regard to language attitudes. Such attitudes are revealed through the distinction between digital and analog forms of communication. This section gives a slightly more in-depth perspective into the nature of language and communication, thereby shedding additional light onto the problem of intercultural writing.

The final section of this chapter focuses on four additional factors between language and culture. Clarity and ambiguity, formality and informality, the relationship between emotion and writing, and negative statements are addressed. Each of these aspects of language and culture increase our understanding of effective communication and intercultural writing.

3.1 Language and thought

It is difficult to write a book on writing around the world without grappling with the overarching problem of language and thought. There has been considerable debate about the interaction between language and thought, ranging between innate and learned theories. At one end of the spectrum is extreme nativism, which claims that all of language is innate. At the other end of the spectrum is the Whorfian hypothesis, which claims that language determines how a person thinks. Few people hold these extreme perspectives, which is good because language and thought must surely combine elements of both innate and learned traits.

The extreme nativism view of language was first proposed by the philosopher Jerry Fodor. According to Fodor, all of language is innate, including each individual word in our vocabulary. This means that “pencils” and “pineapples” are not learned from the environment but exist as predefined items in a mental database. If extreme nativism is correct then every person is born with an inventory of terms installed at birth, long before their exposure

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into the environment. Extreme nativism appears to have few followers and is largely dismissed as a serious theory for understanding how the mind uses language, or whether language impacts the mind.

At the other end of the spectrum is the famed Whorfian hypothesis, which comes in both strong and weak versions. Contrary to extreme nativism, the strong Whorfian hypothesis states that a person's native language directs or guides thought. This means that a native speaker of English is likely to perceive the world within this framework, especially as it relates to the syntax and style of the language. The weak version of the Whorfian hypothesis states simply that language influences but does not determine thought and perception. Like extreme nativism, few people subscribe to the strong Whorfian hypothesis. But the weak version of the Whorfian hypothesis is taken more seriously. The reality is that weakened elements of both extreme nativism and the Whorfian hypothesis must be correct.

Language and thought have to be based on at least some innate features, if for no other reason the learning cannot occur without a learning device. All languages use some combination of subjects, objects, and verbs. All languages develop terms for some colors and most numbers in a linear fashion. And people who acquire a second or third language later in life often say that they continue thinking in their native tongue. This seems especially true for the writing process. If correct, then language must have at least minimal influence on thought. This influence may be little more than a conceptual structure whereby a mental image is associated with a real image which is then coupled with a word.

Part of the problem with the nature and nurture debate about language and thought is that it consistently overlooks the impact of culture. This does not mean the kind of culture that is easily seen, such as music, food, and art. Rather, the most important parts of culture—the mind's inner depths—are equal if not more important than the nature of language on thought. Although culture is an overlooked component of the language–thought continuum, there are good reasons to believe that it is an essential part of understanding the problem. A good example is found by briefly revisiting the bizarre world of zen.

Zen is a branch of the Buddhist Mahayana tradition, which arrived by a shadowy figure named Bodhidharma from Chinese Taoism and *Ch'an* (zen in Japanese) around the twelfth century. Zen is known for all things irrational—a fantastic world of logical paradoxes, twisting chains of reason, bizarre contradictions, and impenetrable conundrums. As if this were not enough, zen deals with all of these tasks in the most cheerful manner, satisfied

that life's big questions are best entered through what seems an otherwise unreasonable window of opportunity. One of zen's defining features is its resistance to words and texts, opting instead for real experience. In this respect, zen is the most empirical of the world's wisdom traditions, as its basis is grounded in the moment. It might even be said that zen attempts to merge with the unity of the universe by avoiding the constraints of language, which are commonly exemplified in its most brain shattering statements. Aphoristic sayings such as the "the universe in a single atom" speak to the awesome power of going beyond language.

The Japanese relationship with language and its impact on thought is captured nicely in zen Buddhism's stance on the problem. Language is a mere vehicle, one of many possible tools, for communicating. It is this distant relationship with language that the Japanese find most comforting, since real experience must go beyond the confines of words. Not only is Japan a high context culture, it is also one that emphasizes the value of silence and all that is between words. At the heart of this silence is a desire and need to preserve social relationships. Sometimes the best strategy for success is to simply do no harm.

3.2 Attitude toward language

People with extensive experience in intercultural communication have a ready stock of often humorous anecdotes about its failures. Many communication breakdowns center on the different assumptions people from diverse cultures bring to a conversation. Such communication failures are often based on differences in how language should be used. Some cultures assume that language is an effective tool for getting information from one person to the next while other cultures preserve its secondary status in communication.

Cultures with stronger low context forms of communication tend to approach language from a functional perspective. This attitude toward language results in an overt attempt to use language simply, with an emphasis on content rather than form. One of the main principles for thinking about language through a practical lens is the close relationship between words and their meaning. There is a reduced sense of ambiguity between words and their meaning among low context cultures, which reinforces the belief that language is practical rather than aesthetic.

Many low context countries and cultures are known for their functional and relatively nonaesthetic approach toward language. Language is often

thought of as a tool or instrument for exchanging information, a conceptually different approach from many high context cultures. Part of this difference can be found in the way native English-speaking cultures deal with greetings and introductions. Foreigners in writer responsible cultures are surprised by the somewhat informal and rapid transition into meaningful discussion. This often means bypassing other possible greetings such as asking about family, the state of someone's health, or even one's age. In many English speaking countries, these questions may seem odd because they reflect seemingly irrelevant pieces of information. In other words, the greeting feels prolonged or delayed. An apparent waste of time in low context cultures is a necessary social lubricant in high context cultures.

Assumptions about language among high context cultures tend to emphasize nonverbal elements of communication. Sight, touch, and interpersonal distance are valued among high context cultures. This perspective is also functional, but it comes with a series of nuances that must be learned over time. Instead of a close relationship between words and their meaning, high context cultures hold a more ambiguous sense of the way language is to be used. Such a perspective leads or reinforces the notion that language is complex and layered. In some respect, a high context use of language reflects a more aesthetic rather than functional sense of language. Although language remains a tool for communicating in high context cultures, it brings an additional sense of aesthetic appeal that is difficult to describe. This approach toward language is easily seen in *chinmoku*, the Japanese emphasis on silence.

Japanese are famous for their high context and analog forms of communication, so it should be unsurprising that they also emphasize silence. It is said that music is about the space between notes, and the same would seem equally valid for how language is used in Japan. The role of silence in Japanese communication is normally considered an essential form of communication, an appreciated skill. The attitude of silence in language may be rightly interpreted as saying nothing but meaning something. Such is the case between people in group conscious cultures, where people hold stronger bonds as a result of significant historical context. The words *haragei* and *ishin denshin* reflect the Japanese attitude toward language. *Haragei* refers to the implicit meaning of communication while *ishin denshin* reflects a sort of telepathy shared between people. *Ishin denshin* is not literally a form of telepathy, but its meaning certainly indicates the real connection Japanese have for communicating with each other.

Attitudes toward writing help explain the way a culture perceives aesthetic forms of language. Poets regularly use language in a way that captures deep

meaning, often through implicit association. Simile and metaphor are two of the more common approaches toward aesthetics and poetics. It should be unsurprising that high context and analog communication cultures often value poetry, as indicated by the number of poems memorized by a country's people. The opposite holds true for low context and digital communication cultures, which keep poetry at a distance.

3.3 Digital and analog

The relationship between language and culture is especially vivid in context of the digital and analog divide. Writing and communication is analogous to audio recording in which a song may be copied by an analog or digital recorder. Both types of recorders can duplicate a song, but the quality of copies will differ depending on the type of recorder being used. Language use in specific cultural contexts is similar to recording audio files.

Digital recording is similar to digital writing and communication. Digital recording is the same as copying an audio file using a digital recording device. The benefit of a digital recording device is that it preserves the fidelity of the original file. This means that copying any one of the duplicates will likely result in another copy with the same quality as the original file. For instance, making one copy of the original will result in high quality duplication. Similarly, copying the copy of an original will also result in high quality duplication. The reason for this is that digital recording is a high fidelity system in which information is preserved at a high level. As a result of using a digital system, artifacts or noise is reduced if not eliminated in a digital recorder. This process is similar to low context communication and writer responsibility.

Cultures best characterized as a kind of digital recorder often rely on low context forms of communication. This means that language is perceived and used as a practical instrument rather than an aesthetic cover. Similarly, assumptions about the power of language among low context and digital cultures are embedded in the way words are used. Instead of hiding or embedding deep meaning in a piece of prose, a writer from a digital culture is likely to write explicitly. The explicit perspective is the one taken by many instructional guides on writing, which ultimately leads to the writer being responsible for effective communication. While this is remarkably effective for cultures that hold language to be a near perfect vehicle for transporting information, it consistently fails for cultures that hold high context and analog values for language.

Analog recording is similar to analog writing and communication. Analog recording is the same as copying an analog file using an analog recording device.

The benefit of using an analog device is that it preserves the character of the original file, which is not the same thing as saying it preserves exact quality. This means that a copy of any one of the duplicates will likely result in another copy with lesser quality than the original. For instance, making one copy of the original file will result in a good but imperfect duplication. Similarly, copying a duplicate of the original will also result in reduced quality. The reason for this is that analog recording is a low fidelity system in which information is not preserved at a high level. Instead, analog recording gradually introduces artifacts or noise into the duplicate. This process is similar to high context communication and reader responsibility.

Cultures best characterized as a kind of analog recorder rely on high context forms of communication. This means that language is perceived and used as an additional component of communication. Likewise, assumptions about the power of language among high context and analog cultures are embedded in the way words are used. Instead of making sure the meaning is vivid and explicit, a writer from an analog culture is likely to write implicitly. This means that the meaning and interpretation of a communication is indirect, multilayered, and less accessible. This also means that effective writing is different for some cultures because language is perceived as an imperfect vehicle for transporting information. An analog use of language assumes that information will be carried imperfectly. As a result of an analog assumption of language, words and meaning are contextualized as one part of many pieces of communication. Nonverbal communication is critical for exchanging information in all cultures, but it is especially important for cultures with an analogic reliance on language.

3.4 Clarity and ambiguity

Differences between clarity and ambiguity illustrate the most important differences in how people write around the world. Simple, direct, and concise language is the hallmark of good writing in native English-speaking countries and cultures. Proof of these rules is found in the most popular books on writing. The best known elements of style regularly caution against overwriting, overstating, using qualifiers, and excessive detail. But the most important feature of good writing, according to these rulebooks, is clarity. Good writing is nothing if not clear, which is true even for those who wish to be obscure. Writers from the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States generally consider

clarity to be the most important feature of effective writing. But this same value is not held by many other cultures.

Perhaps the best known example of ambiguity is captured in the Japanese word *aimai*, which roughly translates as vague, obscure, or questionable. It is said that Japanese are more or less tolerant of ambiguity in communication, which is why it is considered an important if not crucial trait of Japanese life. At the root of *aimai* is a unique relationship with uncertainty, a deep cultural value. Tolerance for uncertainty or cultivation of *aimai* may create some confusion in writing and communication not only at the international level, but also among the Japanese themselves.

The origin of *aimai* is probably rooted in the geographic character of its people. Japan is a small island country, which places it in a precious global position. Its size ensures that fewer abundant resources are available for tapping, while its position to other Asian countries such as China, place its political position in some degree of uncertainty. It is also a small country based off the Asian continental shelf, which means it is susceptible to the whims of nature. Typhoons and earthquakes are common occurrences in Japan, further exacerbating its place is Japan's mountainous terrain. Though beautiful, Japan's already small countryside is less favorable to agriculture, which means people have had to live closely for extended periods of time. The concept of harmony, or *wa*, is an important part of Japanese life, presumably for its precarious geography and dense population.

All of these characteristics of Japanese life have contributed to the emphasis on ambiguity or *aimai*. It was important to make sure that people cooperated in agricultural times, as in the labor-intensive work of rice production. Better cooperation ensured more food, causing a kind of unanimous thinking or group conscious goal. It is important to not disrupt the rhythm of groups in times of necessary cooperation. Perhaps the best reason for maintaining harmony is that it minimizes exclusion, an otherwise risky endeavor. Instead, it is far better to go along with the group to maintain harmonious relations. It is for these reasons that ambiguity is emphasized in Japanese writing.

Roundabout expressions in Japanese go by one of several names, such as *chotto*, *demo*, and *kangaete-okune*. These hedges are often used to decline an offer, but in a warm and friendly manner. A direct question for preferring coffee or tea may result in a response stating that either is fine. This kind of ambiguity, benign as it may seem, is a key feature of Japanese writing

and communication. A similar ambiguity is found in the Japanese use of *maa-maa*, which roughly translates as “not so bad.”

Maa-maa is one of those phrases that say more about a culture than would be possible in a single book. When asking a Japanese student how she did on an exam, she is likely to respond with *maa-maa* even if she received an excellent grade. This response goes back to the nature of humility in many cultures, discouraging personal argument, and maintaining harmony or *wa*. A student who says that she did well is likely to be eyed with some suspicion. The concern, presumably, is that speaking well of one’s own accomplishments indicates arrogance and overconfidence. Neither of these qualities have a home in group conscious cultures.

The result of this kind of ambiguity found in Japan is an emphasis on writing that relies on the same strategy. This is not to say that Japanese writing is unclear, only that it does not follow the same rules toward clarity that are common in native English-speaking cultures. In writer responsible cultures, for instance, ambiguity in any kind of writing or other communication is likely to get a writer into some trouble. Among writer responsible cultures, ambiguity leads the reader to believe that the writer does not know his topic, lacks insufficient research to make the claim, or simply has not thought well enough about the problem. This goes naturally with a predisposition toward a firm handshake, direct eye contact, and agreeable manner.

A similar analogy may be made with interpersonal communication. International students studying in individualistic cultures are likely to take courses from teachers who value clarity, as with the nature of direct eye contact. Take a conference between a student and teacher. American students have fewer problems looking a teacher directly in the eye, unless the teacher is unusually fearsome. Instead, the relationship between teacher and student is less formal. Although the relationship between teacher and student may be friendly but distant, these same qualities ensure that clarity and directness are preserved. The same strategy applies to writing. It is entirely normal for a writer responsible student to write a paper that a teacher disagrees with so long as the cultural value is one based on clarity.

Informality is at the root of cultures that value personal identity, individual freedom, unique points of view, and novel ideas. Low context cultures also tend to be informal, mainly for the affinity to idealize everyone as the same. A teacher who treats his students as equals is likely to be repaid with the highest of all possible comments. Making sure a teacher or person of authority is admired in more individualized cultures depends on connecting with people who otherwise occupy a lower rung on the social ladder. Accomplishing this

task means emphasizing clarity so as to connect with as many different people as possible. If an ambiguous piece of writing is to be understood then it requires that a reader be familiar with its context.

3.5 Formality and informality

Degrees of formality are also important for understanding how language and culture interact. Many characteristics of culture that influence the level of formality are also injected into its writing. Cultures that value formality tend to emphasize personal pronouns reflecting status and position, whereas less formal cultures tend to emphasize equal social relations.

Cultures that emphasize personal identity are normally characterized by their reduced social hierarchies. This is especially true among native English-speaking countries where the presumption of equality is strong. Cultures emphasizing personal traits instead of group norms are accustomed to communicating through less formal means. Although this style of communication is considered adversarial by people from some cultures, the approach is one that reflects the openness of accepting new ideas from a variety of people. Consider the informal communication strategies common to Americans.

Informality, spontaneity, and direct eye contact all characterize the American style of writing and communication. Greetings tend to be brief, social relations casual, and references to social status minimized. Students are encouraged to participate by offering comments and critiques of topics aimed at discussion, and it is not uncommon for professors to request being addressed by their first name. These same strategies for informal communication are also used in writing where introductions are clear and concise and style is professional and inviting. But these assumptions about writing and communicating are not widely shared.

Many foreign writers and students are surprised by the relatively informal writing style of native English-speaking countries. It is said, for instance, that Japanese have some difficulty even communicating with another person until their status is known. The reason for this is that personal interaction depends on understanding a person's position in society. A fellow student is addressed differently from a professor. Adapting writing and communication strategies in group conscious cultures regularly depends on knowing the status of the reader.

Formality may also be viewed through typical social relations. Social hierarchies may be viewed along a vertical and horizontal axis. The vertical axis of social relations refers to the stratification or difference between people. A dean

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has authority over a teacher who has authority over a student. This kind of social relation is universal across human societies, but culture has something to say about how these values are used. A good example is found in Japan, a country whose fundamental cultural features bear the imprint of thousands of years of Chinese influence. The terms *sempai-kōhai* refer to vertical and horizontal types of social hierarchy. Older members of society, or seniors, are usually referred to as sempai in Japanese, a term borrowed from ancient Chinese texts. But sempai refers not only to elders, since it also characterizes a superior individual based on attainment in society. Although sempai refers to people with more experience and wisdom, it is also commonly used for referring to people who graduate from school earlier. But Japanese also have a term for the opposite end of the spectrum.

The term *kōhai* captures the meaning of several words in which *kō* means “later” or “after” and *hai* means “fellow” or “friends.” Students entering the same school or colleagues beginning work at the same company will refer to each other as *kōhai*. The term *kōhai* has a collegial meaning when referring to people of the same or equivalent rank. But *kōhai* is used negatively in relation to sempai, which has a positive meaning. *Kōhai* always defer to sempai out of respect for position, rank, experience, and wisdom. *Kōhai* culture perpetuates and reinforces a stratified society in which people are promoted by rank and tenure rather than personal achievement. Naturally, sempai-*kōhai* culture has built into its system a higher degree of formality that is minimized in other cultures. As a result, it is entirely normal to carry sempai-*kōhai* culture to writing. Consider the following example written by an international student studying for another class in an American professor’s course, and the obvious deference to sempai.

Hello:

First please accept my apologies for today's class. I really should not study another class's test in your class. I just feel that I am not really ready for that test and it weigh [sic] 30% of my final grade in that class, I am really worried about it. But I really should not do it in your class.

Actually, I do participate before in your class, I hope you still remember, and I also read the materials at home, please believe me. Also I am planning to make an appointment with you to talk about our final paper, and my internship. I am looking for a intern [sic] now, and I know you have a lot real world working experience which will help me. I am willing to listen to your opinion and recommendation. Only because too many things going on, I haven't got time make this appointment. I also really applicate [sic] that you so concern us—your students.

However, now I feel so embarrassed for what I have done in today's class and so sorry to make you feel bad. Please excuse me, I promises [sic] it will not happen again.
Regards

This letter is written under the guidance of several cultural values and beliefs, but *sempai* is perhaps the most striking. The first paragraph is a direct plea of forgiveness for studying in class, the violation in which the student is responding. The student clearly feels nervous about an impending exam, which is natural considering the importance of exams in reader responsible education. Although exams have less value in American education, this student nonetheless applies the same value to exams as she would in her home country. But this is not the most interesting aspect of the email.

The second paragraph is remarkable because it appeals to the reader's status. Although the plea seems genuine, the student is clearly grasping for assumptions closely related to *sempai*, or vertical human relations. Because the academic program in which this student studies is based on applied work, she appeals to the professor's experience in the field. The student's acknowledgement comes in the form of "I know you have a lot real world working experience." Because the plea is persuasive only in an environment that values application, which is true for her current field of study, she risks little through these remarks. Aside from the casual but prominent remark about caring for his students, the student quickly moves onto the nature of humility.

Humility and modesty is also related to formal writing, as it has a long tradition among group conscious cultures. Humility is not simply a curious personality trait, but a desired and cultivated value held among people from collective cultures. This is partly based on the need to preserve social conventions and fluid navigation between different kinds of people. There is good reason for nurturing humility in oneself and others since it appeals to moderating potential problems between people. An inability to relocate to another geographic region reinforces the need to make sure people interact well with others. Personal humility based on cultural values also makes its way into writing, where formality is enlisted to try and prevent from offending the reader. All this speaks of a need for acknowledging social differences between writer and reader. It is this kind of formality that also leads to confusion regarding the nature of closeness in writing.

While writers from cultures with strong personal identities are inclined to make friends easily, they are also apt to maintain some distance with the same

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group of people. The same characteristics that help the individualist create strong social relationships are the same characteristics that ensure some degree of personal protection. Naturally, this attitude is often carried in writing whereby the reader instantly warms to the paper but senses a deliberate buffer. It is this trait that creates an additional sense of objectivity in much native English language prose. Writers from group conscious cultures, on the other hand, appeal through different means.

Writers in many countries throughout Latin America directly address the formal status of the reader, especially if she holds a higher position. Pronouns, flowery language, ornate descriptions, and direct references to social status all create a sense that the writer is aware of the reader's social place. These strategies are likely to promote a warm connection with the writer. Carrying this strategy throughout an entire paper is likely to develop a closer connection with the reader, but at the cost of objectivity.

3.6 Emotion and writing

Emotion is a fundamental feature of human nature. Long thought to be an enemy to rational thought, it is now well-known that emotion is critical toward effective decision making. Some of the best evidence for emotion's part in rational decisions comes from people who have damage to the emotional seat of the brain. These unlucky few may find it difficult to distinguish between good and bad people or spending money appropriately. Despite emotion's importance to decision making, culture greatly influences the way people use emotion for making choices. It even affects the way people write.

While the tactics of debate are mitigated in many countries—say, in cultures where group harmony prevails—there is still considerable difference among cultures who aspire toward an underlying truth. The British, for instance, are renowned for their polite if not formal debate. And in France, it is normal to engage in heated discussions without concern for losing face. Intercultural writing, as with other forms of communication, is subject to the whims of human emotion.

Within a global framework, Americans are often characterized by their relatively unemotional approach to writing. This stems from a desire for adhering to surface conventions of social interaction. Underlying the tendency for cordial social relationships is a sense of emotional control. An emphasis on analytical reasoning and rationality is prioritized above emotional appeals, which are viewed with some suspicion. The American finds it far more important to

stay on target, which means demoting emotion to a secondary role. Emotion's status in American writing and communication applies equally to both positive and negative emotions. Americans are likely to mistrust excessive emotion because it is perceived as clouding the path toward clear thinking. It is for these reasons that even foes are treated with a sense of professional courtesy. "Get your facts right," "control your feelings," and "give it to them straight" all exemplify the American preference for controlled and focused logic.

Similarly, Chinese writing and communication is formal, indirect, narrative, and written from a detached perspective. The role of emotion is also minimal in Chinese writing, a reflection of a broader need to maintain harmony, social connectedness, and adherence to ancient principles of filial piety, humility, and kindness. Each of these characteristics of Chinese culture inform writing, which is distanced from other arguments that may disrupt the social order. If harmony and humility are prized values of the target audience, which is typical in China, then it makes sense to use language in a less emotional manner. Further, effective Chinese writing is also based on history, context, proverbs, and maxims. It is common to find good writing in China that refers to ancient scholars and texts, recites timeless wisdom from respected sages, and brings forth arguments that have a long history of social acceptance. Somewhere between the United States and China is Russia with its winding structure.

Like its geography, the role of emotion in Russian writing is marked by extremes and contradictions. Russia is characterized by its arctic cold and tropical warmth, resplendent wealth and abject poverty, appeal to other countries yet plagued by its xenophobia. Perhaps every country and culture is marked by such contradictions. But the difference, it seems, is that it thrives in Russia. Naturally, the role of emotion in Russian writing is complex. One aspect of Russian writing is reserved, methodical, analytical, and deep. Another side of Russian writing is characterized by its ecstatic and theoretical nature.

Although Russia has been a major culture on the world stage for millennia, which includes milestones in avionics and space exploration, its people are still encumbered by doubt and negativity. Blissful highs have graced Russia's people, but not without a few painful descents. All of these characteristics are found in good Russian writing.

3.7 Negative statements

Most conventional advice states that writing should always be affirmative instead of negative. Affirmative statements connect concepts while negative

statements disconnect concepts. A universal negative statement makes a claim about a broad subject, such as “all writers are solitary.” But a particular negative statement makes claims about a specific aspect or subject, such as “some writers are sociable.” While there are good reasons to advocate for the use of affirmative statements in all writing, some cultures (especially in eastern Europe) hold on to the tradition of negative statements.

As mentioned in the section on emotion, Russians have a duplicitous relationship with emotion and expression. Part of these extremes and contradictions is based on the severity of the land. Russia is an enormous country with many natural resources, yet history has not told an optimistic story in how these elements are used. Brilliant mathematicians and aerospace engineers have been produced from Russia’s fine educational system, although their genius is consistently demoted to second place in the global theater. For all of Russian’s remarkable advances in science, mathematics, literature, and the arts, a sheet of darkness still hovers over the culture. Despite their contradictory nature, Russians have remained uneasy pessimists.

Russian pessimism is the brunt of many jokes, and for good reason. According to the pessimist, “it cannot get any worse than it is right now.” According to the optimist, “they most certainly can.” Such pessimism starkly contrasts with what is certainly American optimism, or perhaps innocence. Americans have long been accustomed to positive results, whether in famine or war. Despite its prominent status on the world stage, Russia has not always been so graced with positive outcomes. Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*, a brilliant literary window into human nature, reveals Raskolnikov’s eventual fate in a labor camp. Americans want no such ending, preferring instead to watch a main character rise above the base elements of turbulence and despair.

Such negative statements commonly make their way into good Russian writing. Despite the possible confusion negative statements bring, they are regularly preferred over an affirmative statement. When an American says that something is “good,” the Russian concedes it is simply “not bad.” But negative statements are used not only for demoting a positive attribute; they are also used for promoting a negative one.

The Russian language, for instance, is full of negatives. Even positive ideas are expressed negatively. Something is characterized as “not big” instead of “small” or “not fast” instead of “slow.” Similarly, Russians often describe their feelings in terms of the same negative statements. She is “not bad” as opposed

to “good.” Taking this concept further, Russians also make use of the double negative. Contrary to its avoidance in English, double negatives simply convey an idea in its true light. One negative is bad, a double negative is worse, and additional negatives further magnify the effect. More negative statements in a sentence only increase the magnitude of its negativity. The Russian predilection for negative statements is in stark contrast to English, where negative statements are discouraged.

4

Writing Around the World

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Overview

- provides practical insight into intercultural writing
- covers elementary principles of writing, matters of form, and approaches to style

Argument and persuasion is a culturally based activity, a process easily viewed through the window of writing. Effective writing adheres to a culturally specific structure, and it is this anatomy that goes unnoticed by people writing for a different culture. Understanding a paper's anatomy or structure is critical for intercultural writing. Anatomy is analogous to logic and the way people think, but it also relates to basic principles, matters of form, and style.

The goal of this chapter is to provide a clear, concise, and practical overview of the primary differences of two major writing strategies used around the world. Underlying these unique writing strategies is the difference between writer responsibility and reader responsibility. While global writing styles are

more complex than these two distinctions, writer responsibility and reader responsibility are useful for their practical application.

- *Writer responsibility*: Also known as parallel progression. Writer responsibility follows a pattern in which the topic of one sentence overlaps the next sentence. In symbolic form, parallel progression assumes an *AB* to *BC* to *CD* format. Writer responsibility is associated with less uncertainty avoidance, greater personal identity, direct forms of communication, universal application of rules, and linear concepts of time.
- *Reader responsibility*: Also known as sequential progression. Reader responsibility follows a pattern in which the topic of one sentence is relinquished to the next sentence. In symbolic form, sequential progression assumes an *AB* to *CD* to *EF* format. Reader responsibility is associated with higher uncertainty avoidance, greater group identity, indirect forms of communication, specific application of rules, and nonlinear concepts of time.

It should also be noted that extended parallel progression is a third method for understanding different writing strategies, which combines elements of both parallel progression and sequential progression. This third alternative follows a pattern in which the topic of one sentence is passed onto the next sentence. The main difference is that extended parallel progression contains multiple sources of additional context, which creates a logical structure that appears erratic. In symbolic form, extended parallel progression assumes an *AB* to *CE* to *CD* to *FG* structure. This is a common format for cultures that embody a mixture of writer responsibility and reader responsibility.

All three of these writing strategies—parallel, sequential, and extended parallel progression—are simplified. The purpose in simplifying these potentially complex writing strategies is to study their structure and style. As a result, the overall goal in examining this aspect of writing is to ensure a fair and comparative analysis than can be easily learned. Again, the distinction between writer responsibility and reader responsibility is accurate only to a point. In writing as in life, there are many exceptions.

A second aspect of intercultural writing is also worth noting, namely that of cultural values and beliefs. Individual people have unique perspectives on the world, but many of the ingredients for developing these perspectives are informed by the culture in which a person spent their formative years. People transfer these same values to the writing process. As a result, writer responsibility is often associated with one set of values while reader responsibility is often associated with another set of values (Table 4.1).

The correlation of a particular form of communication with a specific set of cultural values is not absolute. For instance, reader responsibility is often

Table 4.1 Relationship between writer responsibility, reader responsibility, and culture

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
low uncertainty	high uncertainty
individual identity	group identity
direct communication	indirect communication
universal application of rules	specific application of rules
linear notions of time	nonlinear notions of time

associated with cultures that have strong orientations toward groups. The reason for this is that when a group of people share a long historical context, they also share the knowledge associated with that context. Shared knowledge is easy to accomplish when people are more or less the same. But exceptions are also easy to find. Some reader responsible cultures have an uncharacteristic tendency for individualism. Culture is far from absolute, and exceptions quickly complicate strategies for effective writing. And one of the best introductions for understanding intercultural writing is to examine a paper’s anatomy.

4.1 Anatomy of a paper

It may seem unusual to think about the anatomy of a paper, but writing around the world is precisely about this topic. Some cultures are used to the idea that a good and effective paper is based on presenting an idea, supporting it with ample evidence, and reinforcing the concept at the end. An effective multipart paper in another culture may bring forth a main point, amplify its claim, provide a preliminary explanation, substantiate it with two or three main points, and settle on a conclusion. It is the difference between these two kinds of structures that give rise to the broader differences of intercultural writing (Table 4.2).

Writer responsibility regularly incorporates a three-part structure that includes an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction contains an overview, relevant questions, and an objective. The body of a paper brings forth two or three main points and a prominent counterargument. Evidence and proof is offered by way of accumulative points, each one building on the previous piece of evidence. Finally, a conclusion is offered that is both firm

Table 4.2 Relationship between anatomy of a paper, writer responsibility, and reader responsibility

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
provides overview	provides context
immediate thesis	delayed thesis (may be absent)
parallel progression	sequential progression
accumulative	follows tangents
includes counterargument	absent counterargument (or minimized)
conclusion firm but flexible	conclusion definitive

and flexible. The goal of persuasive prose among writer responsible cultures is to make a sound argument that gives the reader a sense of control over its outcome. The reader decides.

Reader responsibility emphasizes a complex structural and persuasive pattern. While reader responsible papers may conform to a three-part structure, its organizational approach often results in papers appearing to have more than three parts. The main reason for the multipart reader responsible paper is that it absorbs nuance, additional context, and secondary information. Like writer responsibility, reader responsible introductions may contain an overview of a paper's objective. But introductions among reader responsible cultures do not necessarily offer a clear thesis statement. Instead, reader responsibility brings the assumption that both writer and reader already understand the main argument. And in instances when such an assumption may not be inferred, the result is usually one of indifference to a reader's needs. Conclusions are also different, opting for a more definitive claim than found in writer responsibility. A reader responsible author decides the fate of a conclusion. The writer decides.

4.1.1 Overview

Two contrastive papers are examined in this section. One paper is written from a writer responsible perspective and the other paper is written from a reader responsible perspective. The topic of these papers is the debate between nature and nurture. Whether a paper argues for one side or the other is unimportant to the goal of comparison. Instead of refining the details of genes versus the environment, this section emphasizes the strategic anatomical differences between writer responsibility and reader responsibility.

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Writer responsibility: The technical name for writer responsibility is called parallel progression. Much parallel progression, or writer responsibility, follows what is called a linear and deductive pattern. As a result, the topic of one sentence is passed onto the next sentence. The effect of writer responsibility is one in which ideas are neatly stitched together, leaving few gaps between sentences, paragraphs, and overarching concepts and ideas. Structurally, writer responsibility follows a tight deductive chain of reasoning. Expressed symbolically, writer responsibility uses an *AB* to *BC* to *CD* structure. Writer responsibility is often associated with lower uncertainty avoidance, greater sense of personal identity, direct forms of communication, universal application of principles and rules, and linear concepts of time.

In writer responsible cultures, the anatomy of a paper normally follows a three-part structure. These three parts include an introduction, body, and conclusion. The introduction provides the problem, question, and solution. The body provides two or three main points and, frequently but not always, a counterargument. And the conclusion recaps the entire paper, reinforcing the thesis while maintaining enough flexibility for the reader to form a personal opinion. The entire sequence must link from beginning to end.

The Modern Denial of Human Nature

¶1 Human experience may be described in terms of both nature and nurture. While the importance of environmental influence has been emphasized in the past fifty years, partly as a result of the behaviorist psychology movement, it has come at the cost of understanding basic human instincts. If we are to understand human nature, then we need not only a good idea of how the environment affects people but also how genes affect people (Wilson, 2004).

Clear and concise introductory sentence, followed by a brief summary of the problem, an implicit question, and hint of a solution.

¶2 Environmental factors have not always been crucial for understanding human nature. The early part of the twentieth century was marked by a strong tendency to believe that humans were little more than their genes. According to this assumption, people were thought to be fast or large or smart based on an optimal set of genes. Environment was relatively unimportant for understanding people. The emphasis on genes changed when serious consideration was given to the unjust treatment of people, usually based on traits such as gender or skin color (Geertz, 1973; Mead, 1935). The social justice movements of the mid-twentieth century demoted innateness as an important feature of human nature (White, 1949). Although demoting innateness was vital for human rights and social justice, it had an unfortunate impact on the way people think of natural talents.

Begins with brief historical background and quickly addresses the values of equal individual rights. Provides the backdrop for the main argument, which arrives in the third paragraph. Entails the counterargument. Notice the final sentence, which serves as a transition into the next paragraph.

The Modern Denial of Human Nature

¶13 Human instinct refers to the innate programming or predisposition people inherit as a result of their genetic instructions, which are passed down from two parents (Edelman, 2007). It has long been known that genes are important for predicting height, hair and eye color, and a host of physiological traits ranging from cardiovascular disease to parkinsonism (Sacks, 1996). While any parent with more than one child realizes that offspring are rather different, any two offspring share roughly fifty percent of their genetic code (Pinker, 2003). If people want to know their risk for diabetes, then it is usually a good idea to study siblings and close relatives (Damasio, 2005). As a result, the genetic side of people must be reintroduced into the conversation for a complete understanding of human nature.

Main argument of the paper, which promotes the value of genes. Relates the argument to everyday experience, such as eye and hair color. Last sentence finalizes the argument and transitions into the conclusion.

¶14 It is possible that we will never know the exact proportions of nature and nurture for any given attribute, but that does not mean we should stop trying to understand human nature. Although the past is marked by unethical treatment of people based on incorrect genetic assumptions, we can learn from these mistakes and build a unified model of the human race.

Summarizes the paper, revisits the counterargument, and affirms the original thesis. Firm but flexible.

From a reader responsible perspective, the overview of this paper appears to follow a simple, ordinary, and even common sense structure. That is, the paper captures an undemanding argument about the dispute between nature and nurture. Anatomically, or structurally, the introduction seamlessly feeds into the second paragraph. In the second paragraph, a little background is provided on the nature and nurture debate. The reader learns that nature has not always been held in such high esteem, a transition marked by an emphasis on social justice. The second paragraph smoothly transitions into the third paragraph, which emphasizes the importance of nature. The final sentence of the third paragraph reiterates a sense of balance, fluidly leading into the conclusion. The conclusion, a place of poise and summary, reminds the reader of the goal while retaining a sense of flexibility. Each of these features, while sometimes found in reader responsibility, are hallmarks of effective writer responsible prose.

The introduction (1) provides a summary of topics covered in the paper. The introduction briefly outlines recent historical context of the debate, presents a problem (emphasis on nurture), brings forth an implicit argument (nature also important), and concludes in a clearly defined thesis. The last sentence of the introduction combines the nature and nurture debate into a concise objective: “If we are to understand human nature, then we need not only a good idea of how the environment affects people but also how genes

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affect people.” The paragraph meets all of the requirements for an effective writer responsible introduction.

The second paragraph (2) offers context and historical transition into the way people currently think about human nature. Typical of writer responsibility, the history and background of the issue is contained in a relatively small section. In fact, it is safe to assume that the only reason to include history is for its ability to transition from nature to nurture. One of the key ideas of this paragraph is that social justice is highlighted as a driving force behind the trend to emphasize nurture. That is, one of the key functions for leaning on historical context is to hoist an argument for nature. Another important feature of writer responsibility in the second paragraph is the final sentence: “Although demoting innateness was vital for human rights and social justice, it had an unfortunate impact on the way people think of natural talents.” The final sentence should not be overlooked, as it addresses a key feature of writer responsibility. In particular, this final sentence exemplifies parallel progression, which follows an *AB* to *BC* to *CD* sequence. The topic of one sentence is passed onto the next sentence.

The third paragraph (3) expands into the paper’s main point. It exemplifies the full force of writer responsibility, which is the gradual, analytical, even methodical accumulation toward a grand claim. In this instance, the claim is the importance of understanding human nature through genes. Anatomically, the author begins with a basic and common sense view of genes. The reader is reminded that genes have been implicated in a variety of uncontroversial traits ranging from hair and eye color to diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Despite the fact that dietary habits are important for many diseases, people regularly admit the power of genes in the formation of these diseases. Through the power of parallel progression, the writer presses the reader to admit that other aspects of human nature should also be understood through the force of genes. The final sentence of the third paragraph enlists another characteristic of writer responsibility.

After linking diabetes and cardiovascular disease to genes, the author then expands the genetic link to other aspects of human nature: “As a result, the genetic side of people must be reintroduced into the conversation for a complete understanding of human nature.” The effect of this final sentence is one of summary, reinforcement, and transition. In essence, the final sentence exemplifies parallel progression in which the third paragraph feeds into the conclusion.

The fourth paragraph (4) reinforces the argument while retaining balance. The function of writer responsible conclusions is to summarize the main

points of a paper, acknowledge the validity of critical counterarguments, and finish with a firm but flexible directive. Often but not always, writer responsibility offers suggestions, recommendations, and practical advice for future work. In effect, the conclusion reflects all previous aspects of the paper by emphasizing simple, accumulative, and practical guidance. But the reader is always in charge.

Reader responsibility: The technical name for reader responsibility is called sequential progression. Much sequential progression, or reader responsible writing, follows what is called a nonlinear and inductive pattern (some people describe reader responsibility as quasi-linear and quasi-inductive). As a result, the topic of one sentence is surrendered to the next sentence. The effect of reader responsibility is one in which ideas are separated by conceptual gaps, leaving spaces between sentences, paragraphs, and overarching concepts and ideas. Structurally, reader responsibility follows an inductive chain of reasoning. Expressed symbolically, reader responsibility uses an *AB to CD to EF* structure. Reader responsibility is associated with higher uncertainty avoidance, greater sense of group identity, indirect forms of communication, specific application of principles and rules, and nonlinear concepts of time.

In reader responsible cultures, the anatomy of a paper normally follows a multipart structure. These parts include an introduction, a body of two or more parts, and a conclusion. The introduction provides the overview to a problem, sometimes by including historical or related context. The body provides one or two main points and regularly includes secondary and even tertiary information. Counterarguments are often absent in reader responsible prose, or lack adequate credibility as to seem of only minor value. And finally, the conclusion is reserved for asserting a definitive claim and avoiding prevailing counterarguments. The result of reader responsible conclusions leads one to feel compelled in believing in a particular argument, often through the social pull of group identity.

Crows Everywhere are Equally Black

¶1 Genes are probably an important dimension of human nature because they explain a variety of social situations, including one's rightful place in society, the ability to perform specific tasks and jobs, loyalty to people and places, relationships with family and friends, desire to excel in academic and professional settings, and willingness to contribute to the long-term goals of the country.

Long introductory sentence that asserts an argument for nature based on the place of one's position within society.

Crows Everywhere are Equally Black

¶12 The idea that nurture and environmental influence may affect human nature has been prominent for several decades, beginning in the mid-twentieth century. This change was marked by an increased need to remedy unjust treatment across groups of people. People have long discriminated against others based on superficial traits such as skin color, dialect, religious belief, and political affiliation. This changed with the equal rights movement. During this time it became customary to assume that everyone was born with similar aptitudes and abilities. Everyone has an appropriate place in society.	Instances of sequential progression, in which the topic of one sentence is relinquished onto the next sentence. Topic appears to diverge and then return to genes. Final sentence reinforces one's position in society.
¶13 A famous proverb states that "crows everywhere are equally black." This means that crows are always black because this is how they were genetically programmed. The crow is also a metaphor because it assumes that bad people never change. It is written in the genes of crows to be black, which is why they are crows. A white crow may be different because its programming was perhaps changed, possibly from the environment. A white crow is an odd bird indeed. Thus, white crows are an oddity, which is why there is no proverb stating "crows are sometimes black, and maybe white, but never grey." Of course, the environment can cause a crow to produce different offspring, but it is not in the nature of its genetic instructions.	Reliance on proverbs is customary among some reader responsible cultures.
¶14 Human experience may be described in terms of both nature and nurture. Although environmental factors are important, the role of genes is essential for proper understanding of human nature. Genes illustrate not only important aspects of human nature; they also help explain individual roles in society.	Assertive and prescriptive conclusion. Overlooks counterargument by emphasizing one's position within society.

From a writer responsible perspective, the overview of the paper follows a path in which one idea is replaced by a related but tangential idea. The second paragraph provides the backdrop of the paper by emphasizing the importance of nature over nurture. This is also where we find the first hint of sequential progression in which the topic of one sentence is surrendered to the next sentence. The final sentence of paragraph two reveals a marked distinction of reader responsibility. If the second paragraph hints at reader responsibility then the third paragraph defines it. The third paragraph, which begins with a proverb, stems from a series of cultural values normally confined to reader responsibility. Finally, the conclusion confidently asserts that genes are more important than the environment. Prescriptive conclusions are common in reader responsible cultures.

The introduction (1) in the above table offers immediate insight into the strategies used in some aspects of reader responsibility. Specifically, the

introduction offers a cautious argument typical of many (but not all) reader responsible cultures. The author flatly argues for the power of genes because it supposedly explains “one’s rightful place in society.” Such a statement reflects a variety of cultural values and beliefs, including group cohesion and a desire to fit in, which is more likely to be found among reader responsible cultures. Unlike writer responsible introductions, this paragraph magnifies the nature and nurture problem, avoids all but an implicit question into the debate and, as would be expected, offers no hint of a diplomatic resolution to the age old debate. It is the direct nature of the introduction that leads one to realize that it proceeds without the aid of a serious counterargument.

The second paragraph (2) provides the first real insight into the differences between intercultural writing strategies, but there are also similarities. The second paragraph is similar to its writer responsible counterpart, with several marked differences. Similarities are immediately found in the beginning of 2, which presents historical context for an environmental understanding of human nature. This historical background is followed by the notion that social justice is a central feature of human nature. Differences emerge soon thereafter, as revealed in the sequential progression of several sentences.

¶12 This change was marked by an increased need to remedy unjust treatment across groups of people. People have long discriminated against others based on superficial traits such as skin color, dialect, religious belief, and political affiliation. This changed with the equal rights movement. During this time it became customary to assume that everyone was born with similar aptitudes and abilities. Everyone has an appropriate place in society.

The topic of one sentence, an increased need to remedy unjust treatment, is followed by a sentence in which the topic is the long history of discrimination. While these sentences are of the same topic, they do not flow smoothly between each other. Symbolically, the structure of these two sentences is *AB* to *CD*. This is a perfectly reasonable strategy among reader responsible cultures, but may appear disjointed from a writer responsible perspective. The same pattern emerges with the next sequence of sentences, which mentions the equal rights movement. The next sentence emphasizes the common historical belief that people were born with the same aptitudes and skills. The final sentence, surprising from a writer responsible perspective, again shifts to another topic in which everyone is reminded of their proper place in society.

The second paragraph is noteworthy for a couple of reasons. The most obvious issue, at least from a writer responsible perspective, is the continuous

shifting from one topic to the next. While of the same subject matter, one sentence is only indirectly related to the next sentence. For instance, a sentence on social justice is followed by a sentence on one's place in society. While related, these two sentences do not share a common topic easily transferred to the next sentence. Symbolically, this reader responsible strategy loosely follows an *AB* to *CD* to *EF* sequence. Again, this is a common and effective writing approach in reader responsible cultures, one that appears to lack focus from a writer responsible perspective.

The second paragraph also demonstrates a number of important cultural values and beliefs. The base importance in genes, the idea that discrimination is based on "superficial traits," and acknowledging "one's place in society" all speak to cultural values. For instance, many reader responsible cultures share a strong orientation toward groups. Individualism is uncommon in reader responsibility. And any time a culture enjoys a group-oriented value system, the tendency occasionally leans toward the assumption that people are born with a specific function to society. As a result, children born into one family may prepare for careers in business while children born into another family may prepare for careers in the arts. Although these cultural values are changing, such shifts are slow and controversial.

The third paragraph (3), from a writer responsible perspective, offers the greatest insight into the reader responsible mind. One is able to see a range of cultural assumptions about how the world works, no less than the kind of sources the author finds persuasive. The author's strategy is to invoke ancient wisdom for a modern argument, seemingly through the use of local or contextual knowledge. The author then produces a compelling finale to the paragraph. As there is only minimal discussion of a counterargument, the paragraph easily flows into the end of the paper.

The third paragraph begins with a proverb, a conventional means of persuasion among some reader responsible cultures. Arguing for what seems to be the obvious importance of genes, the author invokes "crows everywhere are equally the same." Such a proverb may go unnoticed by readers with different values, but the phrase carries remarkable weight within a specific cultural context. A cultural interpretation of the proverb roughly translates as a kind of metaphorical statement for bad people. In a sense, one can translate this proverb as "bad people are bad no matter where you find them because human nature never changes." Hence, a crow is a crow.

The use of a proverb is remarkable for two reasons. First, the proverb reflects deep cultural knowledge about the world. Proverbs do not stem from popular

culture; they emanate from the deep archives of time. Second, the proverb reflects a specific view of knowledge, one that is not shared by writer responsible cultures. A third understanding of the proverb is also possible in that the saying reflects a deep metaphorical understanding of human nature. Simile and metaphor is part of any language system, but its use is encouraged in reader responsible cultures. But the third paragraph has another interesting dimension in that it incorporates an unusual sense of a counterargument.

The counterargument found in paragraph three is based on an unreal concept, which gives the effect that disagreement is funny at best. For instance, “crows everywhere are equally black” because of their genetic instructions. Conversely, white crows are nowhere to be found also because of their genetic instructions. The author takes the logic further by pointing out that the proverb, a bit of truth passed down through the annals of time, does not admit variations on crows. There is no proverb stating “crows are sometimes black, and maybe white, but never grey.” The result of this strategy is not only effective; it makes a counterargument seem hilarious. The entire argument is based on a reader responsible notion of logic and good reasons. That is, typical of reader responsible cultures, a variety of assumptions are at work—group orientation (crows are the same), higher degrees of uncertainty (eliminates nonblack crows), and a high context form of communication (crows as metaphor).

The conclusion (4) is equally compelling in its drive toward a singular argument. Each sentence in the conclusion emphasizes the value of genes. The author makes sure to draw a definitive claim. Further, the author follows through with an imbalanced argument that emphasizes authority. Although conclusions in reader responsible cultures may be diplomatic, they are more likely to be firm and prescriptive. Reader responsible conclusions, regularly associated with rigid social distinctions, also rely on the writer’s social status to persuade. Depending on one’s cultural perspective, reader responsibility may appear to be less about persuasion and more about coercion.

4.1.2 Title

The title is a conceptual anchor for a paper, and its role varies according to cultural values and beliefs. Some cultures place less emphasis on titles because they are perceived to have an ornamental and therefore less important function. Cultures on the other end of the spectrum emphasize the power of a good title, which grounds the paper within a larger context.

Writer responsibility is characterized as practical, functional, and analytical. This means the titles of writer responsible papers tend to use simple, clear, and concise language. A long and verbose title, at least outside of academic circles, tends to be viewed with suspicion or amusement. The goal of a writer responsible title is to reveal the objective and purpose of the paper. While the title may be offered in a creative and aesthetically pleasing manner, its merit is ultimately weighed against the criteria of use and function. Writing guides for writer responsible cultures rarely address how one should develop a title for their paper, except when addressing the use of colons for compound titles. Perhaps unsurprisingly, when writing guides address titles through the use of colons, the lesson is normally based on optimizing space.

Reader responsibility is characterized as theoretical, abstract, and holistic. This means the titles of reader responsible papers tend to use flowery and ornate language. A short and succinct title may be viewed with condescension. The goal of a reader responsible title is to reveal the thematic purpose of the paper. Creative titles are encouraged among reader responsible cultures, meeting human rather than practical needs. Although the trend is changing, reader responsible titles often refer to historical context and famous quotations or maxims. The subject of writing in reader responsible cultures typically spends greater time on drafting an appropriate title for the paper. It is possible that another reason why titles are important among reader responsible cultures is that they exemplify a rare opportunity to stamp one's unique signature on a paper. When even the argument conforms to existing ideals, the opportunity to craft a clever title is seen as a moment of individuality.

4.1.3 Introduction

The introduction is the opening of a paper, although its contents vary according to cultural values and beliefs. Some cultures value an approach that aims immediately at the target while other cultures value a delayed sense of purpose. Naturally, distinctions between reader responsibility and writer responsibility fail to capture the often subtle differences in the way introductions are developed around the world. Despite these shortcomings, introductions sufficiently vary across cultures to warrant a brief study of their patterns (Table 4.3).

Writer responsibility, known for its brevity and clarity, supports a lean and direct introduction. Reader responsibility, known for its robust and ornate prose, supports a full and oblique introduction. And somewhere between these two poles lie the majority of the world's writers, many of which embody the varieties of both.

Table 4.3 Primary differences in the way culture affects the development of a paper's introduction

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
provides overview	provides context
immediate thesis	delayed thesis (may be absent)
parallel progression	sequential progression

Writer responsibility: Writer responsibility follows a pattern that begins with a problem to be solved, followed by a series of questions derived from the problem, and then a plausible solution. Somewhere in this sequence, often at the end, is found the thesis statement. The thesis crystallizes the entire introduction into a compact chain of reasoning. This variation is standard for many introductions in writer responsibility, although its components are satisfied with a range of strategies. The goal of the writer responsible introduction is to give the reader a specific objective and goal, characterize the importance of the issue, contextualize its relevance within a larger set of problems, and indicate a resolution or solution. The introduction is a collapsed version of the entire paper.

¶1 (1) Human experience may be described in terms of both nature and nurture. (2) While the importance of environmental influence has been emphasized in the past fifty years, partly as a result of the behaviorist psychology movement, it has come at the cost of understanding basic human instincts. (3) If we are to understand human nature, then we need not only a good idea of how the environment affects people but also how genes affect people. (Wilson, 2004)

The introduction begins by immediately providing the context of the paper: “human experience may be described in terms of both nature and nurture.” This first sentence immediately informs the reader of the paper’s scope. Although broad, its range is clearly defined as the argument between nature and nurture. This is a natural writer responsible way to introduce a paper.

The second sentence combines two important features of an introduction in writer responsibility—a question and its solution. This sentence makes clear that behavioral aspects have been the predominant method of thinking about human nature. Revealing this precedent is important for establishing the paper’s purpose, which is reminding the reader about the significance of genes. This approach promptly indicates to a reader that the author has thought well about the topic, capable of offering multiple sides to an issue.

The second sentence also contains what is called an implicit question. Although there is no explicit or literal question, the second sentence carries an inference that the exact ingredients of nature and nurture are unclear. After reading sentence two, it is easy to imagine the reader wondering about the combined impact of the environment and genes. In essence, the second sentence folds the problem and its question into a single sentence. The second sentence also performs a valuable service in that it sets up the final point of the introduction.

Sentence three is the proverbial thesis statement, the paper's main claim. The author notes that a complete depiction of human nature requires not only a firm grasp of the environment, but also the way that "genes affect people." The author has already made clear that a problem with the nature and nurture debate is the current emphasis on environmental factors. Instead, the author argues that a full and robust understanding of human experience is required.

Anatomically, the introduction proceeds from an overarching statement about the full complexities of human nature. It then moves into the recent context of the nature and nurture debate. And finally, the introduction concludes with an assertion that a fuller understanding of human experience may be obtained by way of genetic instructions.

Reader responsibility: Depending on context and culture, reader responsibility follows a more oblique pattern. As with writer responsibility, the reader responsible introduction provides an overview to the paper. The reader responsible introduction is also found in greater varieties than its writer responsible counterpart. Part of the reason for this is based on the flattened role of writing among writer responsible cultures, a degree of status not found among many of the world's reader responsible cultures. As a result, reader responsible introductions develop an overview to a paper without necessarily delivering a specific problem statement. Similarly, such introductions may also lack an explicit line of reasoning over a set of questions derived from the initial problem. Counterarguments are regularly absent from reader responsible introductions. And clear, well-defined thesis statements are regularly omitted in favor of reinforcing a central claim.

¶11 (1) Genes are probably an important dimension of human nature because they explain a variety of social situations, including one's rightful place in society, the ability to perform specific tasks and jobs, loyalty to people and places, relationships with family and friends, desire to excel in academic and professional settings, and willingness to contribute to the long-term goals of the country.

Two features of the introduction are immediately apparent. First, the introduction consists of one long sentence, not multiple sentences. Second, the introduction makes a specific claim as to the merit of nature over nurture. In fact, the entire introduction is based on an assertion that “genes are probably an important dimension of human nature.” But the introduction has other features indicating its reader responsible cultural foundations.

Consider the idea that genes are important because of “one’s rightful place in society.” The notion that one even has a rightful place, as in a social position defined at birth, is a value found only in specific corners of the globe. Reader responsible cultures, for instance, are accustomed to the belief that social position is partly based on family surname, geographic location, and social connections. Many of these values correspond with cultures that encourage high degrees of group consciousness. Similarly, the remainder of the introduction supports the claim that “genes are probably important.”

Aptitude to complete certain tasks, personal and family relationships, and assumptions about individual achievement further speak to the beliefs of some reader responsible cultures. Although the paper argues for the innate value of genes, the introduction begins with a slight environmental argument. Aptitude surely has a biological basis, since no monkey is smart enough to split the atom. But personal and family relationships would seem immune to genetic instructions. The same holds true for personal achievement, or at least the kind of activities one associates with success. Group conscious cultures, for instance, regularly pursue forms of achievement that benefit the group. Personal achievement is celebrated among more individualistic cultures. While ambition may have a strong genetic component, individual values about what constitutes success seems to have no biological basis.

Reader responsible introductions, while sometimes prescriptive, are typically developed on a reluctant structure. This means the introduction presents an overview to a problem, but without a finely tuned target. Reader responsible introductions are also characterized by their lack of balance. Strong arguments are common in reader responsible introductions, which helps explain the delayed or even absent thesis.

4.1.4 Body

The body of the paper is where one finds the most significant differences between writer responsibility and reader responsibility. Some cultures treat the paper’s body as an opportunity to present a string of accumulative facts

Table 4.4 Primary differences in the way culture affects development of a paper’s body

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
brief historical context	deep historical context
parallel progression	sequential progression
<i>AB to BC to CD</i> pattern	<i>AB to CD to EF</i> pattern
accumulative	tangential
includes counterargument	nominal or absent counterargument
abundant and broad references	minimal and restricted references

in which one topic grounds the development of the next topic. Cultures on the other end of the spectrum treat the body as an opportunity for providing insight, detail, and rich context. While elements of both writing strategies may be found in any culture, the distinction is vivid against writer responsibility and reader responsibility strategies (Table 4.4).

Writer responsibility emphasizes modern historical context, follows the overlapping context of parallel progression, builds in complexity and support, grapples with a compelling counterargument, and relies on a deep and broad spectrum of references. Reader responsibility emphasizes historical context, relies on the conceptual links of sequential progression, incorporates secondary or even tertiary information, offers a nominal counterargument at best, and relies on a small set of restricted references.

Writer responsibility: Writer responsibility follows what some people call a linear pattern. Although the idea of linearity is based on a cultural perspective, the concept is roughly based on the fact that premise *A* overlaps premise *B* which overlaps premise *C*. It is this linearity that gives writer responsibility its definitive sense of direction. Although someone from a reader responsible perspective may find this linearity tedious, it is rarely implicated in losing the reader. The linear strategy applies to sentences, paragraphs, and the entire paper.

¶12 Environmental factors have not always been crucial for understanding human nature. The early part of the 20th century was marked by a strong tendency to believe that humans were little more than their genes. According to this assumption, people were thought to be fast or large or smart based on an optimal set of genes. Environment was relatively unimportant for understanding people. The emphasis on genes changed when serious consideration was given to the unjust treatment of people, usually based on traits such as gender or skin color

(Geertz, 1973; Mead, 1935). The social justice movements of the mid-20th century demoted innateness as an important feature of human nature (White, 1949). Although demoting innateness was vital for human rights and social justice, it had an unfortunate impact on the way people think of natural talents.

¶13 Human instinct refers to the innate programming or predisposition people inherit as a result of their genetic instructions, which are passed down from two parents (Edelman, 2007). It has long been known that genes are important for predicting height, hair and eye color, and a host of physiological traits ranging from cardiovascular disease to parkinsonism (Sacks, 1996). While any parent with more than one child realizes that offspring are often rather different, any two offspring share roughly fifty percent of their genetic code (Pinker, 2003). If people want to know their risk for diabetes, then it is usually a good idea to study siblings and close relatives (Damasio, 2005). As a result, the genetic side of people must be reintroduced into the conversation for a complete understanding of human nature.

Both paragraphs of the body follow parallel progression. The topic of each sentence overlaps with the topic of the next sentence. Sentences overlap with subsequent sentences. And paragraphs also overlap. Whether looking at the very small or the very large, writer responsible papers follow the deductive parallel progression pattern.

Paragraph 2 grounds the paper in the historical context of nature over nurture. This is an important foundation from which to work because it provides a necessary context. But this is where context ends, as the paper soon turns toward the more recent advances of social justice. A desire to level the social playing field and mitigate supposed strengths recognized at birth, people from every culture began subscribing to the belief that nurture was equally important. The last sentence of the paragraph provides a transition into the next sentence, that nature is also important. The arc of the argument is always clear, seamlessly moving from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph.

Paragraph 3 maintains the deductive pattern of parallel progression by extending the last sentence of the first paragraph. The “natural ability” of paragraph two cleanly transitions into the “innate programming” of 3. This exchange from one paragraph into the next paragraph is called a transition, and it is a critical feature of writer responsibility. The third paragraph also appeals to the reader’s sense of quantitative research by relating human nature to known genetic traits such as hair and eye color, heart disease, and cardiovascular disease. Such appeals are known to lack persuasive appeal among reader responsible cultures. The end of 3 continues the quantitative appeal by relating physiological ailments with close relatives.

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Reader responsibility: Reader responsibility is defined by its quasi-linear and, in some instances, nonlinear structure. This is not the same thing as saying that an essay literally follows a nonlinear line of reasoning. But when the differences are averaged, reader responsibility consistently resembles a nonlinear structure. Reader responsibility is implicated in following nonlinear patterns because it absorbs tangential ideas. Reader responsibility also includes a nominal or missing counterargument. The main reason for avoiding counterarguments is that they can eventually turn into arguments, thereby defeating one's original purpose.

Intolerance for uncertainty partly explains the light treatment of counterarguments, but it also reflects strong group orientations. Social harmony encourages a friendly and affable demeanor, or a stern and prescriptive authoritarian manner, both of which deflates the value of individual opinion. A final quality of reader responsibility is the minimal or constricted source of references. If everyone is expected to hold the same values and beliefs, or if individual opinions should be submerged, then there is little need to persuade through breadth and depth of sources.

¶12 The idea that nurture and environmental influence may affect human nature has been prominent for several decades, beginning in the middle 20th century. This change was marked by an increased need to remedy unjust treatment across groups of people. People have long discriminated against others based on superficial traits such as skin color, dialect, religious belief, and political affiliation. This changed with the equal rights movement. During this time it became customary to assume that everyone was born with similar aptitudes and abilities. Everyone has an appropriate place in society.

¶13 A famous proverb states that "crows everywhere are equally black." This means that crows are always black because this is how they were genetically programmed. The crow is also a metaphor because it assumes that bad people never change. It is written in the genes of crows to be black, which is why they are crows. A white crow may be different because its programming was perhaps changed, possibly from the environment. A white crow is an odd bird indeed. Thus, white crows are an oddity, which is why there is no proverb stating "crows are sometimes black, and maybe white, but never grey." Of course, the environment can cause a crow to produce different offspring, but it is not in the nature of its genetic instructions.

These two paragraphs follow the basic principles of reader responsibility. Sentences link rather than overlap, as with reader responsibility. The topic of each sentence is relinquished to the next sentence, thereby forcing demands on

the reader. Both paragraphs follow sequential progression by allowing the opportunity to include additional context, giving the appearance of veering off on tangents. The prevailing counterargument is also reduced, which gives the impression that it lacks merit. Finally, references are reduced to a common aphorism.

Paragraph 2 begins in much the same way as a writer responsible paragraph. The first two sentences lay the foundation for the argument, which is that genes are a critical aspect of the nature and nurture debate. The difference, however, arrives in the third sentence. Instead of overlapping topics, sentence three departs from the topic of sentence two. The topic shifts from the “need to remedy unjust treatment” to apparent (but not necessary) discrimination. While the two sentences are not mutually exclusive, and would naturally appear in the same paper, they do not share an overlapping topic. At best, the topics of both sentences have an implicit overlap.

Sequential progression becomes clearer in the next sentence, which again shifts topics. Instead of continuing the theme of discrimination, the author returns to the historical context of the “civil rights movement.” Again, the topic of each sentence in 3 is relevant to the nature and nurture debate. But none of these sentences display an explicit overlap. Rather, sentences are stitched or linked together. The final two sentences of the second paragraph further demonstrate a topical shift. The reader is carried through the idea of human similarity to the nearly bland admission that “everyone has an appropriate place in society.” The last sentence of 2 brings forth a remarkable claim that seems unusual in comparison to the rest of the paragraph.

Paragraph 3 continues the pattern of sequential progression. Instead of picking up the topic of 2’s final sentence, the initial sentence of 3 begins with a proverb. Proverbs are not uncommon among reader responsible cultures because they reflect a common and enduring history. Cultures with young historical contexts possess only a small catalog of proverbs that, under normal circumstances, are referred to as “sayings.” Further, the writer responsible sound bite is never considered good writing because it suggests a lack of originality. Proverbs also indicate deep contextual meaning known only by people living in the relevant context. For this reason, the proverb delivers an analogous or metaphorical meaning. In fact, the author of this paper states that the crow “is also a metaphor.”

The author maintains the crow metaphor by bringing in what initially appears to be a counterargument. A white crow, an anomaly in nature, is leveraged as a counterargument due to its unusual color. The most telling

aspect of the white crow metaphor is in respect to its “oddity.” And the most powerful evidence of the strangeness of a white crow is the lack of an appropriate proverb. Unsurprisingly, reader responsible writing does not place much importance on counterarguments, which is readily seen in 3. As a result, the author includes a nearly humorous anecdote about missing proverbs by reminding the reader of a nonexistent proverb: “crows are sometimes black, and maybe white, but never grey.” Although a crow may be born white from environmental pressures, such explanations appear implausible in light of the argument.

4.1.5 Conclusion

The function and purpose of a conclusion is to recap and summarize a paper. The conclusion is also the time for reasserting an argument, reconsidering a counterargument, and offering suggestions and recommendations. Some cultures use the conclusion for making strong and prescriptive claims to the reader. Other cultures opt for a less definitive and more flexible approach (Table 4.5).

Writer responsibility encourages the use of conclusions for summarizing the main points of a paper, reiterating a plausible counterargument, reasserting the main claim, and offering practical solutions and recommendations. But perhaps the most characteristic quality of the writer responsible conclusion is its tone and style, which is firm but flexible. Reasons for this vary, but may be attributed to the fact that writer responsible cultures are normally defined by democratic ideals and low uncertainty avoidance. Comfort with the unknown translates to making clear arguments. The most definitive sign of confidence is admitting an argument’s limitations.

Reader responsibility also encourages the use of conclusions for summarizing main points. But instead of reiterating arguments and counterarguments,

Table 4.5 Primary differences in the way culture affects development of a paper’s conclusion

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
summarizes	summarizes
reiterates argument and counterargument	reiterates complexities of argument
offers solution or recommendations	avoids practical implications
firm but flexible conclusion	prescriptive conclusion

the reader responsible conclusion focuses on details and complexities. These conclusions also avoid practical implications, preferring instead to traffic in the world of ideas. Although one may encounter examples of balance, the reader responsible conclusion also tends to be prescriptive.

Writer responsible: Writer responsibility uses the conclusion to summarize a paper's main points, reiterate arguments and counterarguments, and provide recommendations or solutions. These types of conclusions resemble writer responsible introductions. One difference between the two is that the conclusion offers practical advice for resolving a problem, or at least suggests recommendations for future work. But perhaps the most important feature of the writer responsible conclusion is its flexibility. The logic behind a flexible conclusion is that it allows the reader to arrive at her own conclusion. This is not the same thing as having a weak argument or failing to follow through an argument. Rather, the hallmark of an effective writer responsible conclusion is a firm and flexible resolution.

¶4 (1) It is possible that we will never know the exact proportions of nature and nurture for any given attribute, but that does not mean we should stop trying to understand human nature. (2) Although the past is marked by unethical treatment of people based on incorrect genetic assumptions, we can learn from these mistakes and build a unified model of the human race.

The first sentence delivers both an explicit and implicit message. The explicit message is that the nature and nurture debate may never be resolved. This is one part of the flexibility found in writer responsible conclusions. The implicit message is that, while the nature and nurture debate may never be fully resolved, one should continue studying the complexities of human nature. The second sentence performs a similar function by reframing the nature and nurture debate against the unjust treatment of people. It is this first half of the last sentence that reminds the reader of the prevailing counterargument. Although restating the counterargument reflects comfort with uncertainty (it is easy to worry about the strength of a counterargument), it bolsters the author's argument by transitioning into the final phrase. As a result, the reader is left with the idea that one "can learn from these mistakes and build a unified model for the human race."

Reader responsible: Reader responsible conclusions are characterized by one of two different strategies. Some reader responsible conclusions are noncommittal, preferring to offer a balanced but undefined conclusion. This would be an

argument without an argument. More often, however, the reader responsible conclusion is well-defined and specific. Similarly, reader responsible conclusions tend to avoid the practical implications of a problem. And when a conclusion does contain a practical problem, the solution is normally prescriptive. Instead of offering the reader a choice in the decision, the author provides a decisive answer. Part of this strategy is rooted in the high uncertainty avoidance that is common to reader responsible cultures.

- ¶14 (1) Human experience may be described in terms of both nature and nurture. (2) Although environmental factors are important, the role of genes is essential for proper understanding of human nature. (3) Genes illustrate not only important aspects of human nature; they also help explain individual roles in society.

Reader responsibility encourages the use of conclusions for summarizing main points. The first sentence of this conclusion performs a summarizing function by offering both sides of the nature and nurture debate. But unlike writer responsibility, reader responsible conclusions tend to focus on the strengths of the main argument.

Counterarguments are also less prominent in reader responsible conclusions. This is apparent in sentence two whereby environmental factors are glossed over to emphasize the value of genes. The main reason for de-emphasizing counterarguments is a discomfort with uncertainty. One need be especially confident to offer evidence that refutes an argument. All of this leads into the final sentence and the nearly definitive claim that genes are critical for understanding human nature. Although surprising from a writer responsible perspective, the emphasis on nature is nothing if not final.

4.2 Basic principles

The basic principles of composition can be difficult to master in one's own culture. But mastering basic composition principles for another culture is especially difficult. Although it may be impossible to fully assimilate the rules and strategies of writing for another culture, their differences are easy to examine. This section examines several important aspects of composition, including global coherence, units of composition, sentence cohesion, positive and negative statements, definite and indefinite uses of language, and necessary and unnecessary words. Each writing principle is studied through two lenses, writer responsibility and reader responsibility.

4.2.1 Global coherence

The phrase global cohesion refers to how an entire essay fits together, beginning with the introduction, carrying through the body, and summarizing in the conclusion. A common thread must run through the entire essay if global cohesion is to be effective. Each point within a section must complete previous points, with the overarching goal of accumulating toward a grand finale. All of this occurs by way of author credibility, emotional appeal, and good reasons (something Aristotle called *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*). Before distinguishing differences between writer responsible and reader responsible forms, it is useful to look at some of the most common strategies for creating global coherence.

There are several universal patterns of global coherence. Although cultural values affect the method by which these coherence strategies are implemented, they nonetheless embody the many variations by which a paper may be developed. Strategies for establishing global coherence include chronological, spatial, general to specific, more to less important, compare and contrast, classification, problem to method to solution, and cause and effect.

<i>Chronological</i>	Common reader responsible strategy. Typically used for presenting deep historical context. Also used in writer responsibility for many topics such as epidemiology and literature reviews for most subjects. Some papers benefit from a reverse chronology.
<i>Spatial</i>	Common reader responsible strategy. Spatial organization is based on organizing principles such as directions, coordinates, and geographic boundaries.
<i>General to specific</i>	Common writer responsible strategy. Begins with a high altitude perspective of a problem and gradually descends onto key points and a solution.
<i>More to less</i>	Used in both writer responsible and reader responsible strategies. This strategy draws in the concept of hierarchy, which places the most important information first. A resume is a good example of the more to less important strategy, although cultural values influence order of significance.
<i>Compare and contrast</i>	Common writer responsible strategy. Compare and contrast methods may be used for initially understanding a problem, as with technical specifications. This strategy is also used as an analytical tool for determining which of two arguments is best.
<i>Classification</i>	Common writer responsible strategy. Classification is based on organizing items according to shared properties. Reader responsible cultures are more likely to organize information based on relationships.

<i>Problem, method, solution</i>	Common writer responsible strategy. The problem, method, and solution approach is common among cultures in which pragmatism holds higher status. Writer responsible introductions may use a similar pattern based on a problem, question, and solution.
<i>Cause and effect</i>	Common writer responsible strategy, but is also found in reader responsibility. Cause and effect seeks to establish a causal relationship between two or more separate events. This is a standard format for scientific inquiry and inductive reasoning.

Although global coherence tends to follow one of these universal patterns, culture dictates how one accomplishes this goal. Just consider the writer responsible advice on global coherence from Joseph Williams, author of the highly regarded book *Style*: “I am sorry to say that I can’t give you a simple rule of relevance, because it’s so abstract a quality. I can only list its most important kinds.” Williams continues by stating that “background or context; points of sections and the whole; reasons supporting a point; evidence, facts, or data supporting a reason; an explanation of reasoning or methods; and consideration of other points of view” all contribute to what is called global coherence. Although Williams refers to the writer responsible form, reader responsible cultures also have methods for ensuring global coherence (Table 4.6).

Reader responsible coherence is characterized by its sequential progression, a tendency for diverting to contextual topics, a restricted list of references, an emphasis on authority, and implicit argument structure. Of these characteristics, sequential progression is the defining quality of reader responsibility. Regardless of the organizational strategy used for creating global coherence, reader responsible writers tend to satisfy global coherence by using an *AB* to *CD* to *EF* sequence. Further, reader responsible writers also rely on contextual

Table 4.6 Relationship between global coherence, writer responsibility, and reader responsibility

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
parallel progression	sequential progression
accumulative	diversionary
abundant evidence	less abundant evidence
emphasizes analysis	emphasizes authority
main points often explicit	main points often implicit

information for forming arguments. From a writer responsible perspective, global coherence in reader responsible papers begins with a direct argument but then veers off into uncharted territory.

4.2.2 Unit of composition

The unit of composition refers to the smallest conceptual building block of a paper. Some writers prefer to think of the sentence as the main unit of composition. Other writers consider the paragraph, multiple paragraphs, or even sections as the main unit of composition. Marking the smallest unit of composition depends on a range of factors. A brief review or description may succeed by using the sentence as the smallest unit of composition. Larger written works must rely on larger units of composition. Of course, culture is also an important consideration when determining the ideal unit of composition.

Writer responsible cultures usually promote the paragraph as the primary unit of composition. The main reason for using the paragraph as the unit of composition is for its ability to meet the needs of analytical, deductive, and accumulative reasoning. For instance, writer responsibility encourages a tight link between main points. And the best way to link two or more different concepts, or forms of evidence, is to build robust connections. This is where the paragraph surfaces, since it is at this level in which proper detail can be applied to a concept. The sentence is too short and the section too long. From a reader responsible perspective, the paragraph as a primary unit of composition appears succinct and contained. The same properties also apply to a counterargument in which a paragraph is the ideal unit of composition.

Reader responsible cultures may work at the level of the paragraph, but they often focus on slightly larger conceptual blocks. The main reason for the higher altitude reader responsible unit of composition is that it accommodates a more complex argumentative structure. Reader responsibility tends to follow an inductive or quasi-inductive pattern. As a result, reader responsible units of composition must accommodate a greater range of linked ideas. From a writer responsible perspective, the reader responsible unit of composition appears unfocused.

4.2.3 Sentence cohesion

Sentence cohesion refers to the link between successive sentences. In some cultures, good sentence cohesion resembles a series of overlapping layers. Each layer or sentence extends onto the following sentence, creating a tight sequence.

Table 4.7 Relationship between sentence cohesion, writer responsibility, and reader responsibility

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
parallel progression <i>AB to BC to AC</i> clear and concise	sequential progression <i>AB to CD to AD</i> elaborate and complex

In other cultures, good sentence cohesion resembles a chain link. Instead of overlapping, this type of sentence cohesion grasps onto the next sentence with little if any overlap. The difference between overlapping and linking directly corresponds with writer responsibility and reader responsibility (Table 4.7).

Writer responsible cultures use a type of sentence cohesion known as parallel progression. The main property of parallel progression is a tight overlap between successive sentences, as well as clear and concise language. Symbolically, parallel progression may be expressed as *AB to BC to CD*. The goal behind writer responsible parallel progression is to capture and retain the reader. If done well, parallel progression keeps the reader on track by signaling constant transition from one sentence into the next sentence. From a reader responsible perspective, parallel progression may appear mechanical, simplistic, and even insulting.

(1) If you study other cultures then you realize that human nature is affected by different perceptions of how the world works. (2) Learning about other cultures provides the tools for learning about your own insights and observations of the world. (3) This means that understanding personal insight, or how one perceives and engages the world, provides the foundation for accepting human diversity. (4) As a result, studying cultures provides a balanced perspective of the nature and nurture debate.

This paragraph follows writer responsible parallel progression. Each sentence neatly overlaps with the next sentence. The first sentence provides an overview and the final sentence summarizes the main point of the argument, which claims that “studying cultures provides a balanced perspective of the nature and nurture debate.” The entire sequence follows the *AB to BC to CD* pattern. The first sentence establishes the importance of learning about other cultures. The second sentence takes the topic of learning about culture and links it with personal insight. And the third sentence links personal insight with the goal of accepting human diversity. The reader easily follows the overlapping

topics of one sentence onto the next sentence. While this strategy is effective for writer responsible cultures, it appears simple and obvious from a reader responsible perspective.

Reader responsible cultures use a type of sentence cohesion known as sequential progression. The main property of sequential progression is a link, but no overlap, between successive sentences. One means of achieving sequential progression is through elaborate and complex language, which also mimics its logical structure. Symbolically, sequential progression may be expressed as *AB* to *CD* to *EF*. Like parallel progression, the goal behind reader responsible sequential progression is to capture and retain the reader. The difference between the two, however, is that sequential progression meets the reader's demands by avoiding the obvious and providing deep context. If done well, sequential progression keeps the readers interest from sentence to sentence in a method that captures the nuance and detail of an argument. From a writer responsible perspective, sequential progression appears complex, multifaceted, and unfocused.

(1) If you study other cultures then you realize that human nature is affected by different perceptions of how the world works. (2) Once you begin to understand the deepest dimensions of culture, it becomes easier to understand your own values and beliefs. (3) Drawing on a global framework to understand human nature may cause you to question your own culture. (4) As a result, if you gain a better understanding of how culture impacts personal perspective, then you are more likely to embrace different people from around the world.

This paragraph follows reader responsible sequential progression. The topic of one sentence does not easily merge into the topic of the next sentence. The first sentence provides an overview of the topic, which ties into the summary of the final sentence. The difference, however, is that the second and third sentences do not have an obvious connection. For instance, the first sentence claims that a proper understanding of human nature should incorporate a view of culture. The second sentence loosely follows the first sentence by emphasizing “the deepest dimensions of culture.”

Knowledge of cultural dimensions and their link with human nature is assumed in this reader responsible strategy. In other words, this sequence assumes the reader knows cultural dimensions and understands their link with human nature. The third sentence follows a similar line of thought. Instead of taking the topic of sentence two, cultural dimensions, sentence three emphasizes the value of a “global framework” and its connection with one's values and beliefs.

4.2.4 Positive and negative forms

Statements may be shaped into positive or negative form. Putting statements in positive form means that it makes definite positive assertions. And putting statements in negative form means that it makes definite negative assertions. Positive forms emphasize the positive syntax of a sentence whereas negative forms emphasize the negative syntax of a sentence. The topic, individual personality, and cultural values all inform the development of whether a statement assumes a positive or negative form.

Writer responsible cultures emphasize the positive form of statements. This means that writers are encouraged to make concrete or definite assertions. Writers should also avoid the use of the word *not*, as it indicates the denial of something. Further, the double negative is perceived as an injurious form of syntax. Placing statements in positive form also demands less of the reader, as it delivers one directly to the main idea.

She is always late [writer responsible].

He thinks studying culture is a waste of time [writer responsible].

Logic is an uninteresting subject [writer responsible].

Reader responsible cultures are more likely to emphasize the negative form of statements. In parts of eastern Europe, the negative form of statements is a normal part of writing. This means that using the word *not* is considered an effective use of language. Unlike writer responsibility, not only is the word *not* an acceptable form among reader responsible cultures, its use as a double negative may be highly valued. In Russia, for instance, the double negative is a common feature of the linguistic landscape.

She is not on time [reader responsible].

He does not think studying culture is a good use of time [reader responsible].

Logic is not an interesting subject [reader responsible].

Both writer responsible and reader responsible cultures aim to communicate and exchange ideas. However, cultures use a variety of communication strategies. Writer responsible cultures emphasize the positive form of statements. Reader responsible cultures occupy the other end of the spectrum, which commonly supports the negative form of statements.

4.2.5 Definite and indefinite language

Although language is an imperfect medium, there is considerable variation in the standards by which its rules are applied. Some cultures value the concrete

use of language in which ideas are clearly and simply portrayed. Other cultures value a less concrete form of language in which ambiguity is built into communication. Although communication is fundamentally about exchanging information, there is considerable variation in the way cultures use its most basic tools.

Writer responsible cultures use language to form clear and concrete ideas. The best way to achieve clarity is by using definite language. Presumably, using definite language reduces the number of errors introduced into a paper. Consequently, using definite language is likely to result in the efficient transfer of ideas. If a driving purpose of writing is to make the reader think a particular idea, then definite language is a good vehicle for the task.

It rains every day in Patagonia [writer responsible].

She smiled as she ate a piece of candy [writer responsible].

Reader responsible cultures use language to form unclear ideas. One of the best ways to achieve or build in ambiguity is to use indefinite language. The main reason reader responsible cultures use indefinite language is that it helps lubricate the thick dynamics of group-oriented cultures. Ambiguity also provides a measure of safety in communication because it may be interpreted in multiple ways, thereby relieving one of responsibility. The writer may attempt to implant an idea into the reader's head, but she will do so using ambiguity.

Unfavorable weather has set in over Patagonia [reader responsible].

She expressed happiness as she ate a piece of candy [reader responsible].

Cultures bring different values to the writing process, a characteristic easily seen in the use of definite and indefinite language. The definite or concrete use of language is associated with writer responsible cultures. The indefinite and ambiguous use of language is associated with reader responsible cultures. Both writer responsible and reader responsible cultures use language effectively within their given context. However, it is important to reconsider the use of definite and indefinite language strategies when writing for another culture.

4.2.6 Necessary and unnecessary words

Cultures vary in the type and amount of words used in a paper. On one end of the spectrum is writer responsibility, which fosters a utilitarian relationship with language. As a result, writer responsibility is associated with the ruthless filtering of unnecessary words. On the other end of the spectrum is reader

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responsibility, which is associated with rich and ornate prose. Confusion quickly arises when crossing cultures.

Writer responsible cultures are known for their relentless pursuit of eliminating unnecessary words. Popular guides in writer responsible cultures emphasize clarity, concision, and directness. This approach results in a lean, analytical, and even masculine writing style. A word lacking function is needless.

He plays excellent chess [writer responsible].

I was unaware of the leaky faucet [writer responsible].

Reader responsible cultures have a less functional relationship with words and rules. As a result, reader responsible cultures tend to forgive the ornate use of language. Effective strategies in reader responsible cultures emphasize ample description, thorough detail, and a flair for flowery prose. This approach results in a robust, sometimes theoretical and, some would say, even feminine writing style. Words are not merely tools; they dress up thoughts in full glory.

There is no doubt he plays excellent chess [reader responsible].

I was unaware of the fact that the faucet was leaky [reader responsible].

Although the primary role of words may be functional, this value is not shared by many of the world's cultures. Writer responsible cultures, which value utility and clarity, go to great lengths in removing unnecessary words. Reader responsible cultures, which value fine details and the aesthetic qualities of language, tend to encourage a richer use of words.

4.3 Matters of form

Culture influences not only the most basic principles of composition; it also affects a paper's shape and form. This section examines intercultural writing through the most important matters of form. Topics include colloquialisms, exclamations, headings, design, and sources and citation. Each of these matters of form is studied through two distinct lenses, writer responsibility and reader responsibility.

4.3.1 Colloquialisms

A colloquialism refers to a common everyday saying. Often, colloquialisms reflect a local use of language and, some would say, its pedestrian use. Colloquialisms tend to evolve quickly, as they emanate from a local rather than global level.

Many colloquialisms are rooted in what is called slang, which is roughly defined as the informal use of language within a narrow contextual setting.

Writer responsible cultures have a more open relationship with language. Part of the reason for this value is based on a democratic notion of human relationships. Writer responsible cultures are normally individualistic cultures, which encourages a heightened sense of self. Because writer responsible cultures celebrate personal identity, the idea that people are more or less the same easily transfers to the use of language. For instance, a democratic assumption about human nature lends itself to notions of equality. As a result, language that would otherwise be considered improper in some cultures is more widely accepted. But colloquialisms are not blindly accepted around the world.

Reader responsible cultures have a less forgiving attitude toward colloquialisms. Colloquialisms are not as widely accepted among reader responsible cultures because they emanate from common everyday experience. Reader responsible cultures tend to be group oriented and, in some instances, high power distance cultures. This means that social position is an extremely important feature of one's character. Unsurprisingly, dialect, syntax, and colloquialisms affect a person's reputation. The same value is transferred to the writing process, making reader responsible prose among the most formal in all of intercultural writing.

4.3.2 Exclamations

Indicating a strong emphatic emotion may be accomplished by using an exclamation mark. Exclamations are normally used for capturing one's attention, which transcends any cultural value or belief. At the same time, some cultures are accustomed to the ready display of emotion while other cultures maintain a subdued demeanor.

Writer responsible cultures frequently have an uneasy relationship with emotion. For many writer responsible authors, emotion enjoys secondary status to logic and good reasons. As a result, the open display of emotion through exclamation marks is normally perceived as a novice mistake. Better, it is thought, to maintain a sense of focus and control for the original target. Emotion can only cloud the senses.

Reader responsible cultures enjoy an open relationship with emotion. Authors from reader responsible cultures are accustomed to vigorous debate, raised voices, and emphatic body movement. These same cultures perceive the use of exclamation marks as an acceptable and perhaps necessary feature of good writing.

4.3.3 Headings

Headings serve a valuable function by indicating new sections of information. A reader need not even read a heading to know that it marks a transition from one block of text to the next block of text. And since headings are the conceptual dividers between ideas, they are likely to work across a variety of cultures.

Writer responsible cultures are accustomed to incorporating a technique known as signposting. The function of signposting is to indicate a change of direction. The techniques associated with signposting are generally associated with writer responsibility, such as using a topic sentence. One function of the topic sentence is to indicate a primary objective or function. Headings have the same role in writing. On some level, headings are the ultimate signposts because they provide a clear visual distinction between blocks of text. As a result, it is customary to see ample use of headings in writer responsible prose. The opposite is true for reader responsible cultures.

Reader responsible cultures are unaccustomed to signposts, which also applies to the use of headings. As a result, it is common for reader responsible writing to appear more as a novel and less as a technical guide. The implication of writing without headings is that it fails to provide the reader a quick strategy for locating information. Thus, a reader is faced with the task of sifting through dense content for finding important information. While not every kind of writing is open to the use of headings, most papers benefit from their use.

4.3.4 Design

Although the design of a paper would seem to defy analysis, there are at least some cultural differences to consider. The use of borders and, to a lesser extent margins, has a rough correspondence with cultural values and beliefs. Although individual variation applies to design, culture informs much of what people consider good aesthetics.

Writer responsible cultures, like their clear and concise writing style, tend to prefer unadorned papers. This means that writer responsible cultures are less likely, and have a reduced appreciation for, the rich aesthetics associated with reader responsibility. For instance, writer responsible cultures de-emphasize the use of borders around a page. This preference for white space is partly rooted in the value that good design is based on utility. The functional and pragmatic values of writer responsibility succeed by what it does not include, which also applies to design.

Reader responsibility fosters a different relationship with aesthetics. Instead of emphasizing utility and pragmatism, reader responsible cultures are more likely to incorporate ornate borders and elegant typography. One may speculate about the primary motives for these preferences, but they are likely based on the idea that social position brings a range of status markers. And one of the better ways to indicate status is by using visual messages. This is not an especially controversial statement if one assumes that a main reason for collecting art is to advertise wealth and social position. Few things declare elite status than the bulk purchasing of goods that do not contribute to survival. The same value applies to reader responsible cultures, which helps explain the use of aesthetic borders and elegant typography.

4.3.5 Citing sources

When reader responsible students attend schools in writer responsible cultures, one of the first mysteries they uncover in the writing process is that of sources and citation. The effective strategy and use of sources and citation varies around the world. And the main reason for having different strategies for using professional and academic references stems from a profound difference in acceptable forms of knowledge.

Some cultures rely on the insights of elders, often passed down through wisdom traditions, classical texts, and conventional maxims, proverbs, and dictums. Other cultures tend to dismiss the past so that they may look toward the future. For these writers, sources and citation must be current, innovative, and practical. Underscoring these two different strategies for using references are unspoken assumptions about the breadth and depth of relevant forms of knowledge, concepts for effective research, distinctions between tradition and innovation, and sharp distinctions in plagiarism (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8 Relationship between sources and citation, writer responsibility, and reader responsibility

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
wide range of sources	restricted range of sources
emphasis on practice	emphasis on theory
conventional and tested	history and proverbs
prefer recent research	research good, but also value history
new knowledge	sage wisdom
strict plagiarism guidelines	loose plagiarism guidelines

Writer responsible cultures rely on a wide range of sources, emphasize practice, prefer references with tangible implications, tend to value recent research, and regularly seek references that contribute toward new knowledge. But perhaps the most important feature of the writer responsible use of references is a strict understanding of plagiarism.

Plagiarism is loosely defined as taking someone else's work and distributing it as one's own work. Plagiarism may be the wholesale copy of previous work, the copying of only a few sentences, or even the borrowing of a concept from another author without proper attribution. Plagiarism is considered a serious offense among writer responsible cultures, which may result in failing courses, dismissal from university or a job, and legal action. It is even possible for authors from writer responsible cultures to get into trouble for reusing their own work. Other cultures have a more flexible understanding of plagiarism.

Reader responsible cultures rely on a narrow range of sources, emphasize theory, prefer references with abstract implications, tend to value wisdom of the past, and regularly seek references that contribute toward new understandings of ancient questions. While the different use of references between writer responsible and reader responsible cultures are remarkably different, it should be noted that some overlap occurs. On the other hand, even the notion of what constitutes plagiarism is so radically different that it presents a sizable problem for intercultural writing.

Reader responsible authors in writer responsible cultures regularly get into trouble for failing to properly cite their sources. Such situations are often based on the idea that good, reputable, and important sources are already well understood by the reader. As a result, citing a source may potentially insult the reader. If the reader recognizes a famous reference then the author should refrain from using a citation. The idea behind this approach is that it is rude to state what is obvious, as though the reader would be unaware of its historical roots. Similarly, if the reader fails to recognize a well-known reference (albeit without citation), then the reader is simply not part of the author's original audience. So much the better, as it is crucial to distinguish between real readers and everyone else.

4.4 Considering style

The writer's state of mind ultimately determines an author's style. That said, writing for another culture means adopting the mindset and attitudes of the target reader. This is an uneasy task, as many people feel (perhaps intuitively)

that it is impossible to fully absorb the same attitudes and beliefs of another country and culture. Although style is a qualitative element of the writing experience, there exists a set of factors that may be positioned within a global context. These factors include the role of personal opinion, length of opening sentences, underwriting and overwriting, the use of qualifiers, decorative words, notions of clarity, figures of speech, and proverbs and clichés.

4.4.1 Subjective and objective

Personalizing a paper with subjective opinion is acceptable in most cultures, although differences surface with regard to its amount. Personal opinion can humanize a paper by acknowledging one's role in the composing process. This kind of human touch can invigorate an argument by connecting an idea with everyday experience. Despite the strengths of including subjective experience, it is not without problems for intercultural writing.

Writer responsible cultures tend to avoid or minimize the use of subjective experience. One reason for this strategy is seen in the writer responsible connection with empirical research, especially scientific inquiry. Science progresses in increments, thanks in part to the constant desire to distance oneself from data. This approach causes, or requires, one to be removed from the world of experience. The goal in scientific inquiry is to isolate an independent variable to determine a causal relationship. And the fewer variables allowed into an equation, the more likely one is able to hone in on the prime suspect. It is for reasons such as this that explain the writer responsible tendency to avoid subjectivity.

Reader responsible cultures have a more personal relationship with people and human experience. Instead of scientific inquiry, which demands a strict distinction between cause and effect, reader responsible cultures often emphasize theory. Theory is typically rooted in deep context in which people are a central part. It is this human element that points toward the desire, if not need, to include personal and subjective opinion.

4.4.2 Length of opening sentences

Appropriate length for opening sentences depends on the paper's forum and purpose, but culture is also an important factor. Writer responsible cultures tend to arrive quickly at a thesis, avoiding details and oblique description. Reader responsible cultures tend to arrive slowly at a thesis by focusing on detail and description. The length of opening sentences applies equally to any section of a paper.

In today's world, it is important to obtain a proper understanding of the relationship between nature and nurture, which is useful for formulating accurate depictions of how biology and environment affect human experience. The nature and nurture debate is important because it has implications for parenting, education, medicine, politics, public policy, art, and science.

The first sentence delays what is potentially a paragraph's topic, which is why it is more likely to be found among reader responsible cultures. The phrase "in today's world" is the brunt of countless jokes among writer responsible composition teachers because it is probably the most widely used phrase in novice writing. From a writer responsible perspective, the first sentence suggests that the author does not know her topic. Writer responsibility also assumes the present era, unless otherwise stated. The same critique applies to the second part of the first sentence, which links the value of human experience with nature and nurture.

Reader responsible cultures are more likely to develop and encourage sentences of the first type. The main reason for this is that reader responsible writing speaks to the drive for detail, support, and context. One need not deliver a rapid thesis when both writer and reader share important values and beliefs. For instance, it is common for people of reader responsible cultures to gracefully accept their social position within society. Such positions are often dictated by the status of one's family, surname, geographic location, nepotism, and community connections. Assumptions about the automatic attributes of social position are connected to notions of what counts as a long introductory sentence.

4.4.3 Underwriting and overwriting

Finding the right balance between writing too much and writing too little is one of the most difficult techniques to master. The risk of writing too much is depleting the momentum toward a key point. And the risk of writing too little is providing insufficient information to follow a topic. One should strive for a balance between excessive and insufficient detail.

Writer responsible cultures lean toward minimalistic writing styles. The main reason for this is that writer responsible cultures tend to consist of people from different countries and cultures. Writer responsible populations are heterogeneous. And one of the best ways to meet the needs of different people, who bring different native languages and cultural backgrounds, is to reduce an idea to its barest parts. This is perhaps best seen in Strunk and White's maxim that "rich, ornate prose is hard to digest, generally unwholesome, and

sometimes nauseating.” As a result, writer responsible cultures are more susceptible to underwriting. This is also the reason that, from a reader responsible perspective, writer responsibility has a tendency to appear analytical, mechanical, and cold.

Reader responsible cultures lean toward thick and descriptive prose. An abundant use of adjectives, sweeping sentences, and a flair for the dramatic are all common features of reader responsibility. One reason for the lofty writing of reader responsibility is its homogeneous culture. People tend to share a deep and enduring sociocultural history, which includes language and communication. Consequently, reader responsible cultures are accustomed to personalizing their prose through free-flowing ideas and excessive language. The Strunk and White maxim does not apply to reader responsible cultures. This is why, from a writer responsible perspective, reader responsible writing appears saccharine, sweet, and sickly.

4.4.4 Using qualifiers

The use of qualifiers is another feature of writing that is difficult to master. The writer’s state of mind and the purpose of a paper influence how one incorporates the use of qualifiers. Qualifiers come in different forms, but they usually reflect a writer’s desire for adding value to a noun.

Writer responsible cultures avoid the use of qualifiers. According to Strunk and White, qualifiers are the “leeches that infest the pond of prose.” Qualifiers are dismissed as unimportant and unnecessary elements of good writer responsible prose because of their ambiguous nature. A bicycle may be *good*, but what does it mean to say that it is *very good*? Although a qualitative element is brought into the description of the bike, it fails to deliver a higher state of understanding. What, exactly, is the difference between a *good bike* and a *very good bike*? Other qualifiers normally avoided in writer responsible prose includes *rather*, *very*, *little*, and *pretty*.

Reader responsible cultures are rather fond of the very important use of pretty words. Although sugary sweet from a writer responsible perspective, qualifiers convey an important qualitative element of effective writing. Qualifiers are also humanizing, since the vibrant descriptions of human nature may only be expressed through the rich palette of experience. A *rose* is not merely *red*; it is a *red, red rose*. The problem with qualifiers is that, from a writer responsible perspective, the author appears to exercise little restraint in their liberal use of language.

4.4.5 Decorative words

Another common concern of intercultural writing is the effective use of decorative words. Fancy words have the ability to express concepts, ideas, and emotions in ways their banal counterparts are unable. A problem arises, however, when the writer of one culture mistakes the receptivity of decorative words in another culture.

Writer responsible cultures stress the importance of using common everyday language. This means that a highly expressive word, both elaborate and pretentious, is considered a hallmark of poor writing. Strunk and White's advice for writer responsible authors warns one to "not be tempted by a twenty-dollar word when there is a ten-center handy." The value of this writing strategy is based on the shared assumption that people should not be segregated by language and words. One should always find a simpler word if it does the same job. Such presumptions of equality are easily applied to the application of decorative words in writing.

Reader responsible cultures enjoy using decorative words because they reflect their contextualized communication styles. Cultures that use language in indirect form, as with high context communication, are normally associated with reader responsibility. As a result, reader responsible authors regularly use language in a creative and aesthetic manner. Frequently, reader responsible authors use the opportunity of writing to indulge in decorative words. The key point to remember is that reader responsibility celebrates the beauty of a stylish turn of phrase. The elegant word is preferred to the ordinary, which meets not only contextual needs but also the kind of social values affirming distinct social positions. This value is readily apparent among cultures in which dialect plays an important part in differentiating people.

4.4.6 Degrees of clarity

The distinction between clarity and ambiguity is rooted in the way cultures use language. Some cultures consider language an almost perfect tool for communication. This is why a practical relationship with language coincides with writer responsibility. If language is infallible then the responsibility has to fall on either the writer or reader. Other cultures consider language to be an imperfect tool, at best. This helps explain why some cultures treat language as only one aspect of communication, saving the best for that which is not verbalized.

Writer responsible cultures have what is sometimes called a digital relationship with language. A digital concept of communication treats language as a tool for making the reader think about a specific idea. Because there is no way that language fails in writing, and the social value is one of equality, the problem centers on the writer. As a result, extreme notions of clarity are typical for writer responsible cultures. This often results in the clarification of drafted sentences, usually resulting in two or more shortened sentences. The same value applies to individual words. If a shorter and more common word is available, it must be used.

Reader responsible cultures have an analog relationship with language. Analog forms of communication treat language as an imperfect tool for communication. As a result, considerable demands are placed on the reader. Writer responsible cultures refer to such demands as “reading between the lines.” This notion reflects the strategy, often intentional, in which an author buries the direct point. From a writer responsible perspective, the lack of clarity in reader responsible prose is a muddled set of ideas.

Finally, differences in degrees of clarity can be seen in modern technical and scientific writing. Writer responsible cultures have sizeable markets in technical and scientific literature aimed at the general reader. Such a market can only take hold in an environment in which there are suitable writers and readers. Because most people are untrained in science, it is imperative that a technology writer or science writer adapt their subject matter for the nonexpert. The values that allow this kind of “technical translation” have an obvious footing among writer responsible cultures, where degrees of clarity are stripped to its most critical parts.

4.4.7 Figures of speech

A figure of speech is a word or phrase used in an atypical manner. The purpose behind figures of speech is to provide clarity and zeal to an otherwise mundane concept. Rules guiding the use of figures of speech are difficult to pin down because they attempt to clarify through indirect methods. Cultural values are also relevant toward their use.

Writer responsible cultures tend to avoid figures of speech for at least two reasons. First, a figure of speech exemplifies an analog and implicit form of communication. Such strategies are the hallmarks of reader responsibility, but they have an uneasy home in writer responsible cultures. A second reason

figures of speech are minimized in writer responsible cultures is from their disruption of logic and reason. The trope, which is a turn or twist in the use of words and language, is based on the notion that an idea can be twisted into a related but different idea. While an effective strategy for some circumstances, the trope is usually perceived as introducing excessive ambiguity into writing.

I am starving [writer responsible].

He is starving for attention [reader responsible].

Reader responsible cultures are more accepting, and sometimes encouraging, of figures of speech. Group orientation helps explain why reader responsible cultures use figures of speech. A figure of speech is only useful if the reader understands its intended meaning. Because figures of speech work through their indirect connection with an original concept, the best way to understand their meaning is through shared experience. Few traits define reader responsibility more than shared experience. But figures of speech work through another technique, which is the broader strategy of delivering multiple meanings. The notion that language and writing is capable, and even effective, at delivering multiple meanings is rooted in contextualized communication. High context and analog communication strategies are linked with reader responsibility because they absorb the rich meaning behind figures of speech.

4.4.8 Proverbs and clichés

Proverbs and clichés have clear relationships with different writing strategies. Some cultures rely extensively on the use of proverbs. Other cultures avoid the common cliché. Both elements of style reflect deep cultural values and beliefs.

Proverbs are pithy sayings passed down through millennia and have their origins in the annals of ancient texts. Strong group values create an ideal environment for perpetuating proverbs. And both proverbs and group harmony are associated with reader responsibility. Clichés have a similar role as proverbs. Clichés are defined as an overused saying and may include proverbs and colloquialisms. Because reader responsible cultures rely on the wisdom of elders, clichés are considered positive and respectful.

Writer responsible cultures usually have short historical contexts, which are rarely conducive to the development of proverbs. As a result, proverbs among cultures with greater personal identity and shorter historical contexts are likely to dismiss the value of proverbs. This may be partly explained through the

value of originality among individualistic cultures. Such writer responsible cultures place tremendous value on new and innovative ideas, even when the goal dismisses someone else's opinion. This value translates not only to proverbs but also clichés. The cliché is nearly despised among writer responsible cultures for the same reason as proverbs. Originality is the prize, and both proverbs and clichés interfere with this aim.

5

Ethics of Intercultural Writing

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Overview

- connects ethics with responsible writing
- reveals cultural source of illogical thinking

It may seem that ethics has little to do with writing, but nothing could be further from the truth. Like a pool of water, the most important characteristics of culture are found beneath its surface. Submerged within these depths are profound insights into how people very different from ourselves see the world. Important as these cultural dimensions may be, studying them sometimes comes with a cost. And that cost is the actual framework by which cultures are compared.

Some people claim that the moment one begins studying another culture, an instantaneous preference emerges from the task. A Frenchman studying Americans will, according to this line of reasoning, immediately compare himself and French culture to all Americans and their culture. The very moment a comparison arises in the mind, a decision is made as to which is of a higher excellence. There are many good reasons to take this advice in one's

study of culture, since the mind is quite good at quickly classifying things in the world. But the concern is most likely an exaggeration.

The best illustration of the comparative problem is to look East. It is well-known that the so-called binary problem, in which one of two items is preferred, is a remarkably persistent Western ideal. Many people from the East are accustomed to what is best understood as a harmonious binary. Good does not exist without evil; male is coupled with the female; light also needs the dark. While each component in these binaries entails positive and negative attributes, it is a simplification to assume that the negative is poorly viewed. On the contrary, the negative component is simply a way for one to understand the complexities of a concept. The negative can only be viewed negatively if it resides alone, which is precisely the point. Negatives always coincide with positives, thereby rendering the comparison inert.

Along the same lines of problematic binaries is the notion of ethnocentrism, which is a slightly different problem. A loose definition of ethnocentrism is looking at the world through one's culture with the tendency to believe some or all of its parts are superior to other cultures. It is obviously wrong to assume that one's culture is superior to another culture, since all cultures display both positive and negative attributes. The trick is to study and appreciate a wide range of cultural values without automatically elevating one value above another value. But this also does not mean that making judgments about how people interact with the world may be entirely suspended. Doing so would mean distancing ourselves from the world, an unnecessary and troubling goal.

The most important ethical dimension of writing around the world has little to do with comparative frameworks and ethnocentrism. While culture presents many opportunities for misunderstanding, experience tells an optimistic story—that people have a natural desire to connect. And communication is at the root of this connection. As with many aspects of intercultural writing, communication occurs through varying degrees of responsibility. And coupled with this responsibility is an important sense of ethics.

5.1 Responsible writing

Communication responsibility comes in two types, reader responsible and writer responsible. The responsibility of communication refers to the onus of decoding information, albeit author and speaker or reader and audience. A number of factors are relevant toward what counts as responsible communication, but this section emphasizes their differences.

Table 5.1 Primary differences between writer responsibility and reader responsibility

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
writer is responsible	reader is responsible
immediate access to topic	delayed access to topic
proofs from evidence	proofs from affirmation
counterargument is critical	counterargument may be overlooked
analytical	dialectical

From a writer responsible perspective, communication proceeds from a centralized thesis, progresses from general to specific principles, follows perfect deduction, accumulates through various forms of proof, offsets primary counterarguments, and definitively summarizes while providing room for interpretation (Table 5.1).

Examples of writer responsibility can be found in any American course on argumentation, many technical and scientific papers, and Plato’s *Phaedrus*. A contemporary offshoot of writer responsible communication includes self-help guides, mainly for their intent on helping the reader help themselves. English is often considered a writer responsible language because of its association with short sentences and paragraphs, common use of language, omission of meaningless words and phrases, avoidance of long introductory phrases and clauses, and a desire to control sprawl. The English language is strongly associated with writer responsibility.

Reader responsibility is more or less the opposite. Reader responsible communication moves toward a centralized thesis, progresses from specific to general principles, follows induction or quasi-induction, confirms existing arguments, and frequently overlooks counterarguments. The conclusion in reader responsible writing confirms existing ideals. Languages associated with reader responsibility include but are not limited to Japanese, Chinese, Russian, French, and Spanish.

The ethical aspect of communication arises when a reader expects something different from the writer. Writer responsible authors may dismiss the importance of details (insufficient context), convey the obvious (insulting), engage the reader through informal language (unprofessional), and democratically argue an opinion (pointless). Reader responsible authors may spend too much time on details (irrelevant), deliver secondary information (unfocused), engage the reader through stylized or formal language (unprofessional), and

forcefully argue an opinion (dogmatic). Underscoring all of these differences is a deep sense of ethics.

5.1.1 The writer

Determining who is responsible for communication is easily the most important ethical aspect of intercultural writing. Joseph Williams, writer responsible author of *Style*, notes that the majority of his book is based on the assumption that we “owe readers to be clear.” Williams’ guidelines indicate writer responsibility, a principle based on the assumption that accountability for misunderstanding falls on the writer. While the reader may be at fault (say, permitting one to be distracted while reading), Williams assumes the writer must do all she can to effectively deliver a message. But Williams is careful to follow his ethical principle with a polite disclaimer, noting that readers also have a responsibility for earnestly trying to understand a complex passage. That said, Williams’ advice is clear—use verbs, cut meaningless words, use affirmative sentences, and “write to others as you would have others write to you.”

Writer responsibility follows what is normally called deductive reasoning. The type of logic in which one principle directly locks onto the next principle is referred to as deduction. Deductive reasoning is seen as the foundation of nearly the entire history of Western logic, although it has been seriously overhauled in the past century. And when people are accused of being unreasonable or illogical, the reference is almost always to logical deduction. Consider the following argument on chess.

If there are no chance factors in chess then chess is a game of pure skill.

There are no chance factors in chess.

Therefore, chess is a game of pure skill.

If the premises of this argument are true then the argument is also true. But one has to agree that there are no chance factors in chess. One also has to agree that chess is a game of pure skill since there are no chance factors in chess. Thus, it only follows that chess is a game of pure skill. This kind of deductive reasoning mimics the ethical principles of writer responsibility.

It is important to note that deduction is not the only kind of reasoning available for solving problems. And as can be seen in a game of chess, deduction is only as powerful as its premises. Each premise overlaps with the next premise. If each premise is true then it creates a sense of logical flow. The goal is to build a series of overlapping topics from beginning to end. Readers take a clear understanding of the topic and its reasoning. The writer has been responsible.

But this also does not mean the reader must always agree. In fact, the power of deduction is only as strong as its weakest link. Many arguments fail to persuade because the reader simply disagrees with one or more premise in the sequence. In our game of chess, the most obvious issue is with the first premise—chance factors are a part of chess.

The ethical dimension of writer responsibility, then, is making an argument overlap. Premises must be vivid and accurate, and each claim must neatly fit with its neighboring claim. Further, the entire sequence must flow from beginning to end, leaving no missing gaps. The bulk of one's paper should be spent weaving two or three main points toward a single framework. The reader is obviously free to disagree with a conclusion, but not because the method of reasoning is unsound. Rather, disagreement may only come in the form of contesting one or more premises.

The ethical implications of mixing reader and writer responsible forms of communication are immense, but they can be distilled into several principles. First, a writer responsible author should adapt her reader responsible prose to be flowery and ornate. Also important is emphasizing additional detail and context, two aspects of writing often avoided in writer responsible cultures. Further, the author should focus on nouns instead of verbs, since reader responsible cultures are more interested in status and context. An additional ethical consideration is a focus on theory, a somewhat difficult area of emphasis for writer responsible authors. Finally, the author should also adapt the overall structure of a paper to reflect quasi-inductive or inductive reader responsible strategies. An inductive organizational approach allows greater leaps in logic, a common property of reader responsibility.

If the writer is a native speaker of English, she probably knows that one of her main goals is to write simple, clear, and lucid prose that not only makes sense but also persuades. In other words, she should adopt the basic assumption that good writing can be read by many different types of people. But people from reader responsible cultures are often surprised not only by the desire to reach a wide audience, but also the reliance on deduction. All of this takes us to the other end of the spectrum, the reader.

5.1.2 The reader

On the other end of the spectrum is a form of writing called reader responsibility. This means that misunderstandings are placed on the reader, who is perceived to be deficient in some aspect of the communication process. In some instances, misunderstandings in reader responsible settings include inadequate attention

to detail. Other times the problem is insufficient background knowledge of the topic. This is often a key point among reader responsible cultures, since the aim is not to reach a wide and diverse audience. Instead, the goal among reader responsible cultures is often to exclude readers who lie outside the target audience. Filling in gaps, then, is part of the process of reader responsibility. The ethics of responsible communication quickly surface when examined within a comparative framework.

Gabriel García Márquez' *One Hundred Years of Solitude* embodies a number of magnified elements associated with reader responsibility. Leaps in logic, magical realism, flowery prose, and a fluid sense of time are not uncommon literary devices in reader responsible cultures. Marquez's prose is characterized by metaphor, allegory, mysticism, philosophical speculation, deep insight, intuition, and a sense of the mysterious. While these elements are not common to all reader responsible writing, they contrast with writer responsible literature. Consider the American author Ernest Hemingway, who is perhaps best noted for his sharp sentences and concise style. No doubt a career in journalism helped hone his writer responsible craft.

Inductive writing is normally characterized by the movement from specific principles toward grand theories, leaving some readers with the sense that something is missing. Such is the case in science whereby an observation or series of observations leads to a theory about how something works. At the root of induction is a probable conclusion, which differs from a definitive conclusion. If its premises are confirmed, deductive logic yields definitive truths while inductive logic reveals underlying principles. The pinnacle of science often rests on assumptions that call for a slight leap in reasoning, which calls for some comfort with uncertainty. With adequate time and replication, repeated observations become known as principles or laws.

The ethical dimension of reader responsibility is filling in all of the details required for inductive logic. While a core set of principles is crucial for reader responsible writing, it is entirely normal for logical gaps to exist. In fact, the majority of reader responsible writing emphasizes secondary details that provide context. This ethical dimension of reader responsible writing should not be underestimated, as it provides the foundation for effective communication.

It is also important to note that an inductive, or even quasi-inductive approach, does not feel as though it flows from one clear idea to the next idea. In fact, from an ethical point of view, a direct correspondence between ideas is inappropriate. Such a linear or writer responsible approach amounts to an intellectual slight, a kind of insult in which the reader is perceived as inadequate.

Inductive writing appears to float in and out of sight, grasping important bits of knowledge along the way. Readers are also accustomed to graciously agreeing with the author, at least her main principles, so the notion of persuasion is less of a factor in reader responsibility. The ethical dimension of reader responsibility is one that frees the writer of responsibility.

5.2 Culture and illogical thinking

Fallacies are some combination of invalid arguments based on false premises and invalid logic structures. While culture is an important aspect of poor reasoning and writing, it is certainly not its cause. This is especially true once one realizes that logic is both an art and a science. Logic is a science because it proceeds by way of rigor, reason, and rationality. But as many people know, reason is not entirely rational, or even rigorous, which means that logic is also an art. A fundamental difference between the art and science of logic is a sense of freedom about what constitutes acceptable forms of knowledge. Should one opt for purely definitive claims, or is some degree of flexibility acceptable? The answer to this, in part, depends on the degree of uncertainty with which one is comfortable.

Writer and reader responsibility are related to the kind of logic that is considered acceptable and, in particular, the fallacies that are considered unacceptable. In fact, logical fallacies are crucial for understanding effective intercultural writing because they reflect deep cultural values and beliefs. Some of the most troubling logical fallacies are rooted in writer responsibility. Part of this may be explained in the historical context from which writer responsibility emerged, namely that of Greek thought and culture. Many of these ancient values have influenced modern life, and they have certainly affected perceptions of sound reasoning.

5.2.1 Hypothetical syllogism

Traced back to the Greek logician Aristotle, the syllogism is a logical argument in which a conclusion is inferred from two statements or propositions. A syllogism is the most basic form of all logical structures, proceeding by way of deduction. As a result of its deductive nature, syllogistic arguments tend to be rather easy to follow and assess. Consider the following example in symbolic form.

Every M is P.
Every S is M.
Therefore, every S is P.

The first statement is the major premise, the second statement the minor premise, and the third statement is the conclusion. While all three statements are important for developing an effective syllogism, the middle statement is especially crucial. It is impossible to relate the first and third statements without a link, or second statement. The syllogism is easy to understand in symbolic form, but it is equally simple when expanded into a series of sentences.

All men are mortal.
Socrates is a man.
Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

This rather famous syllogism uses the basic principle of deduction to formulate a true conclusion based on true premises or statements. The first statement, that all men are mortal, is obviously correct. The second statement, Socrates is a man, is also a true statement. Therefore, it makes sense that, by the fact that Socrates is a man and that all men are mortal, so too is Socrates. The three parts of the syllogism make for a fairly simple problem in logic and easily translates across countries and cultures. But syllogisms come in different types, and one of its most interesting variations is called a hypothetical syllogism.

The hypothetical syllogism is another type of valid deductive argument that uses three statements, but in a slightly different manner. Consider the following hypothetical syllogism in symbolic form.

If P then Q.
If Q then R.
Therefore, if P then R.

From an intercultural perspective, the hypothetical syllogism is an endlessly fascinating type of logic. The main reason for its peculiarities is that the hypothetical syllogism mimics the writing strategies held by many people around the world. This form of deductive logic imitates parallel progression in which the subject of one sentence is handed off onto the next sentence. Cultures using parallel progression—in which sentences proceed from *A* to *B* and *B* to *C*, thereby resulting in *AC*—are also using a species of logic known as hypothetical syllogism. Both parallel progression and the hypothetical syllogism are specific to writer responsible cultures. This is different from sequential progression in which the subject of one sentence is passed onto the next sentence, with little to no overlap.

Intercultural confusion arises when authors from reader responsible cultures fail to grasp the nuances of the hypothetical syllogism. From a reader responsible perspective, the hypothetical syllogism and its associated writing

style of parallel progression seems obvious, repetitive, and excessive. While the hypothetical syllogism is a valid form of deductive argument, its tight sequence of statements or proofs may give the impression of redundancy. Although the hypothetical syllogism does not appear excessive from a writer responsible perspective, writers and readers from a variety of cultures should take caution when analyzing this type of deductive logic.

5.2.2 Equivocation

Equivocation is when a term has more than one meaning. The problem with a word having multiple meanings is that it leads to ambiguity. Many logicians agree that unintentional ambiguity is not a fallacy. But most logicians also agree that intentional ambiguity is, by definition, fallacious. Whether intentional or accidental, equivocation is a significant contribution to poor reasoning and writing.

Unlike a syllogism, which uses precisely three terms, an argument of equivocation uses four terms. Consider the following example in which four terms are used, and then study its conclusion.

M—P
S—Q
Therefore, S—P

Each letter in this argument represents a different statement. If M leads to P and S leads to Q, then S leads to P. This is an example of equivocation because the argument proceeds by trying to equate two statements with no logical connection. There is no statement linking S and P, although each is linked to equally different statements. The problem with this type of reasoning is that a statement is made to appear equivalent to another statement, even when proof is lacking. Consider an expanded example of equivocation.

Everything that runs has feet.
A river runs.
Therefore, a river has feet.

This is obviously an absurd conclusion. The first statement, while technically inaccurate, is essentially true for a reader without detailed knowledge of animals (e.g. some insects). But this is not the problem. The problem occurs with the second statement in which the term “runs” is given a second meaning. Instead of an organism using feet to run, the term is used as a commentary on

the steady flow of water. The problem is that water and rivers do not have feet. The disparity between running feet and running water leads to the obvious conclusion that a river does not have feet. This is the problem of equivocation. Consider another example about the characteristics of blood and stars.

Plasma is the substance of stars.
Aleksey donated to the plasma bank.
Therefore, Aleksey donated stars.

Similar to the example on running water, this conclusion is based on two rather different definitions of plasma. The first phrase states that plasma is the stuff of stars. The problem occurs with the second statement in which plasma is redefined as a component of blood. There is clearly no relationship between star plasma and blood plasma. Star plasma is the ionization of gas while blood plasma is the liquid component of blood. The fallacy of equivocation occurs when plasma is used in two different ways, but the conclusion treats them as equal.

Because language is at the heart of equivocation, or can be, it is also an important part of culture, reasoning, and writing. Unintentional reasoning is not unethical, but intentionally misleading someone through equivocation is an obvious fallacy. Culture is also important, since speakers of a second language are often unaware of the nuances of how native speakers use a language. For instance, an Ethiopian reader may be unfamiliar with the phrase “running water.” From her perspective, the phrase “running water” is likely to invoke images of water that is running. Such a miscalculation creates an especially difficult problem of equivocation. The same problem of equivocation holds true for plasma.

5.2.3 Using and abusing tradition

The role of tradition varies with different groups of people. Cultures with relatively short histories are less inclined to lean on tradition. But for cultures with long histories, the allure of the past can be great. Finding balance between good reasons and historical context is the key to clear thinking and persuasive intercultural writing.

As cultural anthropologists note, the role of tradition is a necessary feature of societies. Tradition solidifies beliefs, injects meaning into important events, reinforces communal bonds, and perpetuates meaning by reinforcing shared values. Weddings and funerals come to mind as important traditions among

cultures around the world. The goal of many marriage traditions is to solidify relationships, consecrate values, make a public declaration of a mutual bond, share and create stories, and celebrate. Funerals are also cause for celebration, at least in some cultures. They are also a time of profound sorrow, shared memories, and overt expressions of sympathy for family and friends. Tradition is one way of creating and maintaining meaning, a critical feature of human nature.

But there is a risk to tradition, at least in respect to logic, intercultural writing, and persuasion. Using tradition to make and support a claim is not the same thing as making a clear and reasoned argument. The notion that something should be done a certain way because that is how it has always been done is insufficient reason. It is entirely possible that history is wrong, which means progress hinges on breaking from tradition. Such is the case with brain science.

It was once thought that the mind was wired in a fixed manner. This belief led to the conclusion that it was impossible for people to recover from debilitating brain disorders, such as stroke or auto accidents. It is now known, for instance, that the brain is remarkably plastic, capable of tremendous reshaping in response to a variety of dilemmas. While it is possible that one may never fully recover from a stroke, the brain is constantly undergoing a process of cognitive rewiring. Breaking from traditional brain science was critical toward this understanding.

Equally problematic is disregarding tradition. Cultures that encourage personal identity are often susceptible to dismissing the importance of historical context. Such oversight may result in the belief that the past has nothing to offer since it is the future that seems most important. Granted, it can be difficult to reconcile the wisdom of the past with the potential of the future. A prominent argument for studying history, instead of ignoring it completely, is that one may learn from past mistakes. There may be some truth to this assumption, as seen through an example of hygiene practices within medicine.

In the 1840s, Vienna General Hospital was not an especially safe place for women to deliver babies. While maternal death rates varied by month, there was a disconcerting ten percent chance a mother would die soon after giving birth. The cause of death was nearly always puerperal fever. All of this changed when Hungarian physician Ignaz Semmelweis became house officer of the Vienna General Hospital First Obstetrical Clinic in 1846. Semmelweis deduced that inadequate hand washing was the cause of fatal puerperal fever, an infection that could be nearly eliminated through regular hand washing with chlorinated lime solution. After instituting a mandatory hand washing policy, maternal death rates from puerperal fever rates dropped immediately.

Semmelweis went on to publish his results, which were almost universally rejected by the medical community. Part of the reluctance came from the disbelief that physicians were actually killing their patients. But another aspect of the problem was with tradition itself, which was based on the staunch belief that hand washing was an irrelevant aspect of medicine. In other words, the medical community held onto tradition. The irony is that the role of tradition and medical hygiene had now shifted to the other end of the spectrum. Currently, hand washing is universally accepted among physicians and patients. But the problem is that the system has a few remaining loopholes, which accounts for a sizeable number of deaths each year. The culprit is not holding onto traditions of the past. Today, the culprit is overlooking the most important lesson there is from this tradition—careful attention to sterilization.

The culture of the medical community is related to the broader sense of culture. Groups of people tend to hold similar values about how the world works. Even people who staunchly disagree with this notion of group continuity often come from cultures in which personal opinion is celebrated. The result is that people who voice exceptions often come from cultures that encourage exceptional thinking. The same patterns emerge with regard to tradition. Holding onto tradition is common among group-oriented cultures, which carries the risk of excessive historical dependence. Disregarding tradition is common among individualistic cultures and may result in overlooking crucial facts or events.

5.2.4 Democratic fallacy

Also known as *ad populum*, the democratic fallacy is a mode of reasoning in which a claim is made on the basis of prevailing opinion. Appeals oriented toward the group are primarily based on emotion. Culture is an important aspect to consider for democratic fallacies because some values and beliefs encourage group continuity. While everyone is susceptible to the democratic fallacy, some cultures encourage reasoning that leads to appeals based on its essential values.

It is tempting to make an argument based on an emotional connection with the audience. In fact, a hallmark of effective writing is to engage the reader in a way that connects. At a fundamental level, emotion is a major component for connecting writers and readers. Democratic fallacies are potentially damaging because they may perpetuate existing ideas. This is obviously a problem because beliefs across large groups of people are not always true. The widely held belief that our planet was flat is perhaps the most famous example of

a democratic fallacy gone awry. But with time, and the fact that oceanic explorers never fell off the planet, this fallacy was eventually revealed to be untrue. But uplifting old and incorrect ideas is not always so easy, especially when deep cultural values are in the way.

Consider the beliefs associated with group conscious cultures. Strong adherence to the collective good, social harmony, filial piety, and respect for authority are common values among many of the world's cultures. It should not be surprising, then, to find that the democratic fallacy is especially common among cultures with strong group orientations. Many times, such opinions arrive from the top, as with political leaders, corporate executives, respected teachers, and community leaders. Once people in a group have more or less agreed with the opinions of a leader, at least in practice, the goal is to perpetuate the ideal. While the same holds true for less group-oriented cultures, the tendency for democratic fallacies reaches a level not typically found among individualistic cultures.

But democratic fallacies also occur in cultures that perpetuate notions of personal identity, individual freedom, and self-expression. This is particularly true when individualistic cultures experience times of duress, as in a sudden economic hardship or act of terrorism. Under such conditions, it is easier to gather momentum for an argument when large groups of people hold the same opinion. For instance, few people believe that the latest particle accelerators are capable of creating black holes. But if a physicist were to suddenly disappear during an experiment, it would be difficult to dismiss the possibility that a black hole had formed.

5.2.5 Abuse of expertise

An expert is someone with the proper credentials to authoritative claims. Expertise is acquired through a combination of education and experience. Some group-oriented cultures value education whereas individualistic cultures tend to value experience. Regardless of the aspects that qualify one to be an expert, the notion of expertise is always a concern for logical thinking. Consider the following argument about an expanding universe.

Professor Sagan says the universe is expanding.
Professor Greene says the universe is expanding.
Professor deGrasse Tyson says the universe is expanding.
Therefore, the universe is expanding.

If we assume that all of these people are experts in their field of astronomy, then their input on the fate of the universe should obviously be included. A noted astronomer is naturally more reputable than, say, a science writer with a moderate interest in astrophysics. But one potential problem is adopting their opinion without evidence or explanation. While professors Sagan, Greene, and deGrasse Tyson may be flawless guides to the stars, their opinions should also be trusted only in respect to the facts.

The issue one should have with the professors' claims is that opinion alone should not carry an argument. Arguments can succeed only when delivered through facts and logic. This does not mean that connecting with the reader through emotion should interfere with an argument. Rather, one should be sufficiently skeptical of a claim in the absence of verifiable forms of evidence. The best kind of expert advice combines not only credibility and emotional appeal, but also good reasons. Critical as these three aspects are to clear thinking, culture has a strong influence on their moderation and use.

Take the dimension of culture about social relationships. Along the continuum of social fabric reside two distinct ways of seeing the world. One is through the lens of personal identity and individualism. The other is through the lens of group identity and collectivism. The use and abuse of expertise is closely tied with these two ways of seeing the world.

People on the individualistic side of the spectrum find it natural to question authority, since they approach the world with a skeptical eye. The abuse of expertise is more difficult to carry through since supposed experts are distilled through the filter of an incredulous reader. This is not to say that the abuse of expertise is absent among individualistic cultures. Rather, it is more difficult for one to bamboozle their way into the mind of a skeptical writer responsible reader. Abuse of expertise obviously occurs in individualistic cultures, but has fewer opportunities for gaining traction across broad groups of people.

A somewhat famous example of the abuse of expertise is found in early twentieth-century astronomy, and it occurred between two respected authorities. The first authority was Percival Lowell, an American mathematician and astronomer with a special fascination for Mars. The second authority was Alfred Russel Wallace, an English naturalist, biologist, and co-discoverer of evolution by natural selection.

Lowell was long convinced that Mars nurtured life, a notion that quickly materialized in his astronomical sketches. Lowell's notebooks are full of vivid

but incorrect Martian images that included light and dark regions, polar ice caps, and a rich network of canals. Lowell theorized that a highly intelligent city-dwelling race was to be found on Mars, and that the large canals were proof of this truth. The assumption that Mars contained life may have been perpetuated by a fictional but no less believable story from H. G. Wells' science fiction classic *The War of the Worlds*. Wells' war was about a Martian invasion. Oddly, it took an evolutionary biologist to set the story straight.

Alfred Russel Wallace disagreed with Lowell, an opinion that surfaced by his review of one of Lowell's books. Wallace showed that Lowell was wrong about Mars' average temperature. Wallace also reasoned that Mars' air was much thinner than Lowell's projections, and that craters should be as abundant as earth's moon. Wallace also did not believe that large tributary canals were the work of hydrologic engineers. The belief that Mars was inhabited by an intelligent species also was not shared by Wallace. Perhaps Wallace was less susceptible to the Wellsian narrative of a Martian invasion. Regardless, it is noteworthy that the supposed expertise of Lowell's Martian vision should be uprooted from a rather terrestrial evolutionary biologist. Expertise does not guarantee truth.

The collective side of the spectrum finds a slightly different approach to authority. While skeptical, people from group-oriented cultures are encouraged to blend in with the crowd. Individual opinion abounds, but it is usually concealed in an effort to increase group continuity. Consider the Japanese notion that the peg sticking out should be promptly knocked down. The same holds true for personal opinion, skeptical inquiry, and notions of expertise. A tendency for cultures that encourage harmony is often coupled with the tradition to persuade through use of experts. Japanese business meetings, for instance, are regularly used to distribute decisions made by top executives. While someone from a collective culture may be an expert on a given subject, the priority regularly goes to authority rather than forms of proof or evidence.

The uses and abuses of authority are perpetuated in all cultures. Individualistic cultures, a group encouraged to form personalized opinions about the world, are just as susceptible to the abuse of expertise. At the same time, it is somewhat more difficult for a writer within an individualistic culture to use expertise for gaining traction on an argument. This is easily seen in the relationship between teacher and student in countries such as Australia or the United Kingdom. Here, students are likely to question an instructor until a reasonable conclusion can be met. Such a conclusion is partly based on the basic principles of evidence. The same teacher and student relationship in

Russia, on the other hand, leans toward the authoritarian. Coinciding with this increased distance between unequal people is the tendency to abuse expertise.

5.2.6 Quantifying quality

Quality is regularly expressed through quantity, at least in some cultures. Quality refers to the somewhat nebulous understanding of things based on their outward appearance. Many people relate to substances through sight, sound, and touch, and not through concrete data. People are interested in if not obsessed by the quality of things, but such interests do not rule out their quantitative dimension. But a problem occurs when a certain quality is formulated in crude numbers and statistics, rendering its essence inert.

The dispute between art and science, a relatively recent split, has been one in which two ends of a spectrum fail to meet. On one end of the continuum are poets, painters, and philosophers. These people understand reality, or human nature, through rich and broad strokes. Scientific inquiry is limited. But the aesthete knows that a novel or painting can perhaps reveal more about the human mind than a laboratory experiment. On the other end of the continuum are scientists and skeptics. These people understand reality, life, and the universe, through critical scientific inquiry. Art is egregious. The scientist knows that a beautiful experiment can capture the spirit of human nature. Artists describe the world and scientists count the world. The two ends of the continuum never seem to meet.

The quantification of quality is a positive feature of persuasive writing, up to a point. And some cultures are apt to rely on quantification more than others. Part of this difference rests in the way cultures cope with uncertainty. Cultures with less uncertainty—stable economy, political stability, reliable health system—are likely to use numbers and data to support an argument. This is partly explained by the comfort that low uncertainty avoidance cultures have with scientific inquiry. Science is empirical, which requires formulating and testing hypotheses. The beauty of science is that repeatable results have the final say in the development of a theory. If the data say one thing and the theory says another, then the theory must be revised to reflect observation. Accomplishing this task means finding some degree of comfort with uncertainty.

It is for this reason—comfort with uncertainty and the tendency to empirically validate the world—that lead to the excessive use (and abuse) of data and numbers. This kind of quantification leads to the belief that all arguments

benefit from more and better data. Much of human nature is outside our scope of understanding because it resists quantification. Health, beauty, sex, love, food, shelter, safety, friends, foes, and interpersonal alliances are only a few of the many curious and complex dimensions to the human species. Although many of these aspects are open to testing—say, experiments on altruism and selfishness—the laboratory has failed so far to reveal definitive explanations of even the most basic aspects of human nature. Even a universal appeal to beauty has limitations, which is surprising given its profound implications for evolutionary fitness. And this is why the arts are so important, because they fill a human desire to understand the world in which we live. At times, Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* can tell us more about how the mind works than that of the most prolific neuroscientist. But it does not stop some cultures from trying to quantify quality.

Quantifying quality becomes a particular problem when writers and readers arrive from different cultures. Readers from group-oriented and high-uncertainty cultures are likely to view the abundant use of data and statistics as counterproductive or suspicious. Also, someone from a group oriented or reader responsible culture is probably going to be apprehensive about quantification because it exemplifies a world view in which reality is reduced to bits and bytes. Instead, writers accustomed to crafting personalized arguments will benefit from additional context and less data. Similarly, authors from group-oriented cultures will strengthen their claim by incorporating more data for their individualistic reader.

Finding a balance between quality and quantity is always difficult. The key is to remember that individualism is typically related to low uncertainty avoidance, empiricism, and a strong drive to incorporate data from the hard sciences. Such a drive should be tempered not simply by the desire to think clearly and write logically but also for reaching out to readers with different cultural values and beliefs.

5.2.7 Cause and effect

Also known as *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, the phrase is loosely translated from the Latin as “after that, therefore on account of that.” The cause and effect fallacy is essentially a logical problem of causality. There is also an issue of time involved in which the effect is distanced from the cause, or the supposed cause. A cause and effect fallacy proceeds by the appearance, but not proof, of causation. An event *A* is perceived, which is closely followed by event *B*. Events *AB* are

separated by some interval of time, thereby giving the appearance of causation. The fallacy, then, is assuming that *A* necessarily causes *B*. The problem is that a single apparent link between events *AB* is insufficient reason to believe in causation, at least some of the time. Consider an example of desert running.

Egor runs in the desert every evening. On evenings in which he brings a bottle of water, Egor notices that he feels strong and replenished at the end. Because Egor developed a pattern of bringing water on evening runs in the desert, he concludes that strength and vigor increase from proper hydration. The problem, however, is that bringing water may have been a secondary feature of the equation. While water is surely an important factor for desert running, Egor's recovery may have been from choosing to bring water on nights with low humidity. Less humidity allows heat to escape from the desert floor, thereby reducing the strain on Egor's aerobic system. The point is that water may have been a critical aspect of his recovery. But low humidity may have also been the cause. Revealing the true correlation between *A* (water bottle) and *B* (desert run) is complicated by a possible external factor (low humidity).

Ascertaining the real cause and effect relationship requires controlling for water, running, humidity, and recovery. These combinations include running on humid nights with and without water and then recording Egor's recovery. It is also necessary to study the relationship between running on low humidity nights with and without water, again assessing Egor's rate of recovery. Thus, the true cause and effect relationship between water, running, humidity, and recovery require sufficient testing. Although water is the most likely candidate for explaining Egor's recovery, only testing can reveal the true cause and effect relationship.

Culture is an important dimension to problems of cause and effect. Cultures expressing group-oriented behaviors, especially people in Asia, are familiar with dispelling the supposed myth between cause and effect. The emphasis on a beginning and end carry less authority in the East. This does not mean that Eastern cultures cannot see links between cause and effect. Naturally, links between cause and its consequence are just as vivid in Eastern cultures. Rather, the emphasis on causes, or even a first cause, is one especially embedded within Western culture. In fact, one need only consult literature of the ancient Greeks to unveil the extraordinary amount of time and energy spent on trying to discover first causes.

The same holds true for writing. Establishing tight deductive links between cause and effect is common among writer responsible cultures. Writer responsibility normally leads to the notion that an effect must have a cause. If a first

cause is unknown then it is the responsibility of the writer to establish probable points of origin. Reader responsibility writers and audiences are less accustomed to the notion that cause and effect are necessary. This results from the looser inductive links between cause and effect, a typical feature of reader responsible cultures. The point is to remember that cause and effect may be a logical fallacy, but the conceptual space between a supposed cause and its supposed effect may be undervalued among some writers.

5.2.8 Appeal to pity

Also known as *ad misericordiam*, appeals to pity are found in every culture. Pity is loosely defined as a feeling of sorrow for the misfortune of other people. The feeling of pity is a good thing, as it reflects how one person can feel for another person. One may even say that pity has a biological basis since it benefits survival by protecting those undergoing temporary problems. The problem with pity, especially as it concerns writing and argumentation, is when it is used unethically. Culture is intimately tied up with appeals to pity.

An appeal to pity is an invalid argument, or fallacy, because it is improperly used for leveraging the emotions of the audience. While there is nothing wrong with the general appeal to a reader's emotions, it is possible to connect in a deceptive and unethical manner. Perhaps unsurprisingly, culture is closely connected with the way in which readers perceive pity. Consider an act of plagiarism.

A student has just submitted a paper written by a friend during the previous semester. The professor recognizes the topic, as it relates to a book he no longer uses in the course. When confronted with the offense, the student denies any misconduct and explains her struggles with its research and writing. Pressed further, the student eventually gives in and pleads for mercy. Tears flow, eyes avert, and trembling commences. The goal is forgiveness through an appeal to pity. With any luck, the professor recognizes the mistake, acknowledges the apology, and offers the student a way for salvaging the paper and the course. But in the wrong hands, the student has committed an unjustified act of plagiarism. Although an appeal to pity may work, it amounts to a fallacious form of reasoning.

Culture is an important element in appeals to pity because some values lead more naturally to its use. In much the same way that group-oriented cultures have a natural reverence for teachers, so too with an appeal to pity. Pity is itself an act of subordination, an acknowledgment that some pressure has gained

the upper hand. As a result, group-oriented cultures are apt to resort to argumentative techniques that draw on the pity of a superior. While such behavior may be characterized by a need to maintain social harmony and preserve “face,” the emotional appeal is quite real.

Individualistic cultures are, of course, also susceptible to appeals of pity. There is no reason why an Australian student with a plagiarized paper would overlook resorting to an emotional appeal of pity. On the other hand, there are good reasons why an Australian student is more likely to resort to an appeal of flattery. Further, it is entirely possible that the equivalent of an appeal to pity in the United States would be trying to increase one’s credibility. The same plagiarizing student, especially if an American, might be inclined to wear a shirt of a reputable university rather than admit inappropriate behavior. Appeals to pity are complicated, made more difficult by culture, and never considered good forms of reasoning.

5.2.9 Appeal to flattery

An appeal to flattery is a method of gaining support for an argument by appealing through emotion. Using flattery normally occurs by deflecting attention from a troubled argument, typically focusing on a positive aspect of the audience. Appeals to flattery occur in every corner of the globe, but deep cultural values and beliefs are critical for understanding their use in an intercultural context. Consider the following letter of apology from an unprepared Asian student.

First of all, thanks so much for your efforts to make us be able to understand the book. After the first two classes I think that the professor is so nice and knowledgeable that he may help me to get a correct and full understanding of science communication. But I failed.

This is only a brief segment of the plea, but the strategy is clear. The student goes to the heart of the matter in the first sentence by stating the professor has made a difficult book accessible. She proceeds by flattering the teacher with niceties. Finally, the student submits to an act of deferential failure. In Asia, this student’s appeal to flattery would probably go a long way. But in native English-speaking countries, such forms of flattery tend to produce one of two results. One, the professor may feel slightly embarrassed by what seems to be flattery overload. Flattery is a somewhat uncommon strategy among less group-oriented cultures, and certainly not a standard in individualistic settings.

The second possible interpretation of this event is that the professor interprets the student's plea as an act of manipulation. Although in some instances an appeal to flattery can be deceptive, this is a dangerous assumption when crossing cultures.

Appeals to flattery constitute poor forms of reasoning in any culture, but there are good reasons why they appear in certain contexts. Like an appeal to pity, the appeal to flattery may be rooted in deeply held values and beliefs about how people should interact. A culture valuing harmony and social cohesion may appeal to flattery as a way of maintaining one's position in society. This is a natural belief to assume when superiors are revered for their experience and wisdom. The opposite may hold true for individualistic cultures in which an appeal to flattery may actually backfire.

5.2.10 Affirming the consequent

A type of conditional argument, affirming the consequent is considered a logical fallacy because it leads to conclusions about premises based on its conclusion. While affirming the consequent structures may be true, their internal logic does not necessarily lead to truth. Consider the following sequence of three statements.

If P then Q.

Q.

Therefore, P.

At first glance, this argument appears true because one may initially think that P and Q are the same. This is not the case, since the first statement indicates a direction in which the claim is true. Q occurs after P, thereby revealing the path of the statement. The second statement of Q affirms the consequent of the first statement. The conclusion is obviously problematic. Although P may be true, it is not necessarily true. And this is the point of affirming the consequent. The conclusion may be true, but only by chance. The same problem occurs when the structure is expanded into sentences.

All stars are burning spheres of plasma.

Burning spheres of plasma.

Therefore, stars.

The first statement is true, since all stars are burning spheres of plasma (well, more or less). The problem occurs with the second statement in which

one encounters a burning sphere of plasma. It is technically possible, for instance, that a burning sphere of plasma is not a star. The sphere may be a type of laboratory plasma, identified by its much smaller density, size, and luminosity. But a burning sphere may also be another type of chemical reaction.

Affirming the consequent faces similar intercultural problems as cause and effect. The first aspect of this potential intercultural fallacy is specific to causation. This is especially vivid when compared against the Western fondness for locating first causes. Determining whether something is made of parts or a whole, or if time is a series of finite or infinite intervals, is easily traced to Western philosophy. Embedded within these ideas is a tendency to see the world as a finite assembly line with a beginning and end. This is why authors from writer responsible cultures are concerned with logical fallacies such as affirming the consequent. It is also the same reason why authors from reader responsible cultures are less likely to be concerned with affirming the consequent. In fact, as seen in the logical fallacy of cause and effect, affirming the consequent may not be perceived as an especially troubling fallacy.

6

Intercultural Toolbox

Chapter outline

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Overview

- provides tips and tools for intercultural writing
- examines correctness, authority, and rules for writing

It is impossible to create a static image of culture since one of its defining characteristics is constant change. In much the same way that genes self-replicate into the next generation, so too with culture. Many values endure multiple generations, but generations also evolve to meet the demands of a new world. Group orientation may be prized but greater economic stability eventually results in greater individual identity. The best one can do is to take a snapshot of culture, aim for its most fundamental values and beliefs, and then attempt to project how these values may evolve into the future. If culture were thoroughly unpredictable then it would not be culture; it would be chaos.

The guidelines that follow are just that, a small set of rules about an equally small catalog of cultures. The values that go into classifying each culture as either writer responsible or reader responsible will vary, but many will stay the same. These guides are meant to serve only as a springboard for writing in another country and culture. One will always find exceptions, especially if they are sought. Cultures change, global events erupt, and core values give way to new beliefs. A culture that was once reader responsible may evolve toward writer responsibility. Any country increasing in economic prosperity is likely to adopt at least some characteristics of writer responsibility. On the other hand, these same cultures are also likely to retain some reader responsible values (Table 6.1).

Writer responsibility is associated with low degrees of uncertainty avoidance, individual achievement, digital styles of communication, the universal application of rules, and rigid orientations toward time. Reader responsibility is associated with higher degrees of uncertainty avoidance, group identification, analog forms of communication, a particularist application of rules, and fluid orientations toward time.

The following relationships are loose approximations of cultural writing strategies.

Writer responsible: Australia, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Netherlands, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, United States.

Mixture: Arab Countries, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Bulgaria, Chile, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, India, Iran, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, Philippines, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Trinidad, Venezuela.

Reader responsible: Argentina, Brazil, China, Columbia, East Africa, Ecuador, Greece, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Jamaica, Japan, Malaysia, Malta, Morocco, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Salvador, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Suriname, Turkey, Uruguay, Vietnam.

Table 6.1 Relationship between writer responsibility, reader responsibility, and culture

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
uncertainty is normal	uncertainty is threatening
individual identity	group identity
digital communication	analog communication
universalist rules	particularist rules
clock time	human time

The complexities of culture defy simple classification. While writer responsible cultures tend to be native English speaking countries, reader responsibility can also be found in these same places. On the other hand, there is a clear link between culture, language, values, and how individual people perceive and interact with the world. The key is to average the differences across cultures and then connect these differences with communication strategies. When averages are considered, the distinction between writer responsibility and reader responsibility is far from arbitrary.

6.1 Five tips for sentence cohesion

Sentence cohesion is roughly defined as the connection between one sentence and the next sentence. From a writer responsible perspective, reader responsible sentence cohesion appears dogmatic, theoretical, delayed, unfocused, and unnecessarily detailed. And from a reader responsible perspective, writer responsible sentence cohesion seems liberal, impulsive, rapid, obvious, and simplistic (Table 6.2).

Writer responsible cultures use parallel progression, which follows an *AB* to *BC* to *CD* pattern. Effective writer responsible sentence cohesion appeals to a wide audience, emphasizes verbs over nouns, uses short introductory sentences, begins each sentence by picking up the topic from the previous sentence, and builds toward an argument. Reader responsible cultures use sequential progression, which follows an *AB* to *CD* to *EF* pattern. Effective reader responsible sentence cohesion appeals to a narrow audience, emphasizes nouns over verbs, uses parenthetical introductory sentences, begins each sentence with a new topic, and adds context and detail.

Table 6.2 Five tips for linking sentence cohesion, writer responsibility, and reader responsibility

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
write democratically	write authoritatively
emphasize verbs	emphasize nouns
use short introductory sentences	use long introductory sentences
begin sentences with related topic	begin sentences with new topic
build ideas with more ideas	add detail and context

6.2 Five tips for global coherence

Global coherence is roughly defined as the overall scope and structure of a paper and its ability to make sense to a reader. Global coherence may be accomplished using a variety of structural techniques. Regardless of the strategy used, cultures have deeper differences in the way they accomplish global coherence (Table 6.3).

Writer responsible cultures typically deliver the reader to an immediate problem, question, and solution. An underlying thesis, often explicit, accompanies the writer responsible paper. Also common to writer responsibility is the emphasis on making each topic clear and ensuring that each point logically feeds into the next point. Sections are also clearly marked in writer responsible prose, as is an explicit link between old and new ideas. Although reader responsible cultures sometimes take the reader on a diplomatic path, they often direct the reader to an immediate and contextualized objective. Each point is substantiated with considerable detail, which results in a sense of complexity. Reader responsibility also emphasizes distinct sentences containing new topics. Fewer section headings are common in reader responsible prose, which is often accompanied by ample context.

6.3 Correctness and authority

Some writers dismiss the rules of grammar because they appear to be based on social guidelines rather than intrinsic structure. If convention dictates that a specific set of rules be used, then convention can change to emphasize a different set of rules. The result appears to be a flexible notion of correctness and authority, thereby rendering all of writing to a relativistic body of rules.

Table 6.3 Five tips for linking global coherence, writer responsibility, and reader responsibility

Writer responsible	Reader responsible
immediate problem, solution, and thesis	immediate claim, context, and objective
make a clear point	make a point with adequate details
make each sentence extend	make each sentence new
clearly indicate sections	use fewer section headings
create old/new links between sentences	weave context throughout sentences

Although there is some merit to a relativistic notion of correctness and authority, grammatical rules are far from subjective. One reason for assuming that all grammatical rules are relative may be understood through the relationship between geography, language, and culture.

People quickly devise unique ways of using language that result in regional dialects. Dialects have a way of stamping a particular character on a group of people, and certain cultural values tend to be associated with these groups. If a group is located in an economic or political center, the tendency is to consider their particular dialect and grammatical rules as a kind of cultural prototype. For instance, if Tokyo is the economic and political center of Japan, then many Japanese will aspire to use language like people who live in Tokyo. Similarly, the modern use of English originated in the social and political authority of London, and not Scotland, which helps explain the popularity of Shakespeare but not Burns.

Correctness and authority has an additional part in intercultural writing because some values explain the degree in which one aspires to accepted grammar use. Although most people desire to fit in with the group, some cultures have deep values that magnify aspirations to join the elite. Group conscious cultures, in particular, are prone to adhere to what is perceived to be the correct and authoritative way of using language. Collective or group-conscious cultures emphasize social harmony and de-emphasize personal opinion. As a result, group conscious and reader responsible writers are especially susceptible to doctrines of correctness and authority.

Correctness and authority may also be explained through vertical social relationships. Group conscious and reader responsible cultures tend to be associated with a larger sense of social distance. People become especially aware of social position when vertical social relationships are heightened. And since reputation and status have a fundamental role in human nature, people find ways of climbing to a higher social position through perceived linguistic authority. Although far from arbitrary, notions of language correctness and authority are two ways of achieving this end.

6.4 Rules of writing

All writers must determine the difference between real, folk, and fake rules of writing. While complex in one's own culture, separating different rules of writing is particularly difficult when crossing cultures.

Real rules reflect the basic properties of all languages. Every language builds sentences according to a specific typology, using at least one subject, verb, and

object (also known as SVO). While these elements are present in all proper syntax from every language, cultures change the order of their sequence. For instance, Bulgarian, Chinese, English, Finnish, Indonesian, Latvian, and Russian all use the SVO typology. The Romance languages of French, Italian, and Spanish also use the SVO structure, although pronouns sometimes function as the object. German and Dutch are more complex because they use the SVO construction for main clauses and the SOV construction for subordinate clauses. Although each language and culture uses a particular linguistic typology, the real rules of subjects, verbs, and objects apply to all cultures.

Folk rules are grammatically correct but may hold different social position within a culture. Nonstandard English, for instance, may lend itself to the folk syntax *She don't need no help*. While grammatically correct, many writers consider folk rules to be inappropriate. These grammarians prefer *She doesn't need any help*. This may result in folk grammatical rules being treated as real grammatical rules. The difference between real rules and folk rules resembles the same issues in correctness and authority. Geography, social status, and local dialect all factor into the perception that some folk rules are also considered real rules. Although folk rules are technically correct, their perception is negative among many writers.

Fakes rules are the kind of writing policies enforced by strict grammarians, although they have no bearing on grammatical correctness. The policies that one should not split infinitives or end a sentence with a preposition speak to fake rules delivered from the past.

Do not split infinitives, as in *to quickly leave*.

Do not end a sentence with a preposition.

Following fakes rules is the province of writers eager to appear educated. Like folk rules, fake rules resemble the correctness and authority strategies found in most languages. Fakes rules are unfortunate because they make novice writers nervous or resentful.

6.5 Misused words

Everyone is susceptible to misusing words and expressions, but some appear more frequently in intercultural writing. The following list contains the most commonly misused words and expressions, some of which have cultural origins.

Aggravate: Refers to making a situation worse, such as a physical injury. One cannot aggravate a person.

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All right: Common phrase for informal speech indicating an affirmative response, such as *agreed* or *ok*. Acceptable in writer responsible cultures but is perceived as unprofessional among some reader responsible cultures.

Among and between: *Among* is used when two or more things or people are treated as a single entity. *Between* is used for distinguishing two or more things or people.

And/or: Normally used when the writer wants to appeal to all readers. The construction is frequently used for conveying a sense of inclusion, which typically results in confusion.

Anxious: Used for referring to a sense of uneasiness and anxiety, and should not be confused with *eager*. The word *eager* refers to a strong or keen interest.

Anybody (see *anyone*): Used for referring to any person. Different than *any body*, which may be interpreted as *any corpse*.

Anyone (see *anybody*): Used for referring to any person. Different than *any one*, which may be interpreted as *any person*.

But: A conjunction for joining clauses or sentences, which leads to long sentences. Tends to be overused in reader responsible writing.

Certainly: A frequently used qualifier among reader responsible cultures. Its use in writer responsible cultures is discouraged because it lacks concrete value.

Cohort: Used for referring to a group characterized by a single trait. Subjects of medical studies may be part of a cohort. Should not be confused with *consort*, which means companion.

Comprise: Refers to all parts of a single unit, which should not be confused with *constitute*. *Constitute* refers to parts that make a whole.

Continuous: Used for defining an event without interruption, which should not be confused with *continual*. *Continual* refers to activity throughout time, which contains interruptions.

Effect: Defined as *result* when used as a noun and defined as *to bring about* when used as a verb. Not to be confused with *affect*, which means *to influence*.

Etc: Abbreviation standing for *and other things*. The phrase is seen in serial lists, especially at the end. Its use is discouraged among writer responsible writing because it lacks concreteness. Common error among reader responsible authors.

Fortuitous: Refers to elements of chance, which should not be confused with *fortunate*. The word *fortunate* refers to a sense of luck.

Get: A colloquialism meaning *have got*. Enjoys some acceptance among writer responsible cultures where informality is allowed. Its equivalent use is discouraged in reader responsible cultures.

In order: A bankrupt expression associated with writer responsibility. Reader responsible authors quickly adopt the *in order to* expression despite its weightlessness.

Interesting: A common adjective used for invoking excitement about a topic. Instead of saying that something is exciting, an author is more convincing by showing how it is exciting. Common in both writer responsibility and reader responsibility.

Meaningful: A common qualifier typical of reader responsibility but discouraged in writer responsibility. Instead of saying that something is meaningful, according to the writer responsible rule, one should explain how it is meaningful.

Notorious: Refers to bad behavior, which should not be confused with *famous*. The word *famous* refers to someone with a large public profile.

One of the most: An overused phrase in writer responsible writing. Its frequency makes it inappropriate for writer responsible prose.

Secondly, thirdly: A highly formalized ordinal number, whose equivalent is commonly found in reader responsible writing. The standard nomenclature in writer responsibility is *first, second, third*, and so on.

Shall, will: A highly formalized use of the future tense in which *shall* refers to the first person, *will* for the second and third person. Its equivalent is typical of reader responsible writing but avoided in writer responsible prose.

That, which: Common error in writer responsible prose. *That* refers to the restrictive pronoun: The hummingbird that is a juvenile is in the flower. *Which* refers to the nonrestrictive pronoun: The hummingbird, which is a juvenile, is in the flower.

This: The pronoun *this* is typically used for maintaining the momentum of a previous sentence. Although sometimes effective, this is discouraged in writer responsibility. But in reader responsible cultures, assuming topics from previous sentences is good writing.

Utilize: Formal variation of *use*. Equivalents of *utilize* are widely accepted in reader responsible writing but discouraged in writer responsible prose.

Very: Like most qualifiers, *very* is discouraged in writer responsibility because it is perceived to lack value. Equivalent qualifiers such as *very* are embraced in reader responsible writing.

6.6 Preparing for intercultural writing

Preparing the mind for intercultural writing should be the first topic of discussion, but there is a good reason to save it for the end. Many people do not realize the deep differences that distinguish one culture from the next, a problem that would only be compounded in intercultural writing.

Aristotle tells us that one of the best ways for learning or improving on a task is to mimic. That is, if one learns to play the guitar then it is useful to watch other guitar players. The guitar student can watch, listen, and learn by imitating the techniques and strategies used by the expert guitarist. The same is true for intercultural writing. Good intercultural writing requires, at least for the momentary suspense of crossing cultures, that one absorb the qualities appreciated by the reader. Writing around the world is no easy task.

One of the best ways for writing well is to read passages by a favorite author, internalizing its rhythm and structure. Most people have at least one favorite author who speaks to our assumptions about language, tone, and style. These aspects of writing are difficult if not impossible to teach, but they address the human element of words and writing. One need not be a poet to appreciate the beauty of elegant prose.

But effective intercultural writing is not just about acquiring some mysterious element of the writing process. It is also about capturing the cultural essence of the reader. This is an uneasy and complex task, and requires more than reading good writing. It requires that one absorb the deepest values of the target culture, a kind of heightened sense of imagination in which one is instantly transported into a foreign culture. The dilemma, of course, is how one should achieve such a mental state.

Aside from reading good writing by authors of the target culture, one should also absorb the culture's music, food, and art. Although these exemplify the outermost features of culture, they are excellent vehicles in preparing the mind for intercultural writing. Food, music, and art have the ability to evoke distant memories of time well spent in foreign lands. They can also elicit a vivid sense of the target reader, arguably the most important aspect of writing. Music, in particular, may have a special ability to alter one's mental rhythm.

All writing is an exercise in the unknown. Dealing with what lies beyond the horizon is a central feature of all writing, which clearly applies to intercultural writing. The key to success is not only acquiring a proper understanding of the reader, but achieving that person's state of mind.

Glossary

Articles: Words such as *a*, *an*, and *the*, which are used for introducing nouns. The definite article *the* refers to a specific object, such as *the book*. The indefinite articles *a* and *an* refer to general objects, such as *a pomegranate*.

Collectivism (see *social fabric*): Strong bonds between people in a culture. Some cultures emphasize social harmony and group relationships. As a result, writers from collective cultures are reluctant to warm to the idea of persuasive writing.

Counterargument: Rebuttal or objection to the main argument. Counterarguments are emphasized in persuasive writing among individualistic cultures, which places higher value on personal opinion and persuasion. Counterarguments are useful for creating a sense of balance.

Counterfactual: Logic term that positions conditional claim within if/then statements. Some people argue that certain cultures are more likely to use a counterfactual. Counterfactuals apply to linguistics, computer science, and philosophy.

Deductive argument: Form of reasoning in which the conclusion follows naturally from its premises. Deductive logic is used to reveal principles, properties, and laws of how the world works.

Extended parallel progression (see *global coherence*): Combines elements of both parallel and sequential progression. Extended parallel progression is characterized by its closely connected introduction and conclusion, but is filled with extensive detail and distance from the original topic.

Global coherence: Refers to the overall structure and continuity of a paper. May be roughly classified as one of three types—parallel progression, sequential progression, and extended parallel progression. Parallel progression is when the topic of one sentence overlaps with the topic of the next sentence.

Sequential progression relinquishes the topic from one sentence to the next sentence, with little to no overlap. Extended parallel progression combines elements of both parallel progression and sequential progression.

Individualism (see *social fabric*): Increased degrees of conceptual space between people. Some cultures emphasize individual autonomy and personal opinion. As a result, many writers from individualistic cultures are encouraged to “go against the grain” by devising nuanced and innovative arguments.

Inductive argument: Based on inductive logic, which is commonly used in science. Writing that uses an inductive argument requires a leap of faith from premise to conclusion.

Negative statements: Tendency to frame ideas and concepts within negative language. Negative statements are a common strategy among Slavic language writers, especially Russian and Serbian.

Parallel progression (see *global coherence*): Sentences that feed directly into the next sentence. The effect of parallel progression is one of close connection or overlap between successive sentences.

Plagiarism: Voluntary borrowing of content without explicit acknowledgement of its original source. Plagiarism is mainly concerned with false attribution of written or creative work. Writers from collective cultures, especially those with extensive historical contexts, are accustomed to using famous references without attribution. As a result, writers from some collective cultures may be unfamiliar with the nuances of plagiarism among cultures with short historical contexts.

Premise: Part of an inference that provides a statement or claim. Arguments consist of two or more premises toward a reasoned conclusion.

Reader responsibility: Burden of responsibility for clear communication is placed on the reader. Reader responsibility is common among cultures with homogenous populations in which readers arrive with similar values, native language, and beliefs.

Sapir-Whorf hypothesis: Also known as the Whorfian hypothesis. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis is the theory that a person’s native language determines thought. The theory comes in two basic versions, strong and weak. The strong version states that language absolutely determines thought. Under this theory, a native speaker of Italian perceives and thinks about the world according to

the rules of Italian grammar. The weak version states that language influences but does not determine thought.

Sentence cohesion: Refers to the manner in which sentences flow, thereby contributing to global coherence.

Sequential progression (see *global coherence*): Sentences that appear to veer off on tangents, only to return by the end of a paragraph. Sequential progression appears to go on a temporary digression but returns to the original topic.

Social fabric: Aspect of culture brought forth by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim. Social fabric refers to the broader patterns of culture in which an individual mind is thought to be significantly informed by other minds.

Time: Also referred to as temporal orientation, time refers to the rhythm of life common to a group of people. A spectrum of time can be applied to the study of culture, ranging from monochronic to polychronic orientation. Some cultures are clock-oriented cultures, also known as monochronic. Other cultures are people-oriented cultures, also known as polychronic. Time is considered one of the most difficult aspects of culture to grasp.

Uncertainty avoidance: The degree and extent that people of a given culture attempt to avoid unknown or uncertain situations. Higher degrees of cultural uncertainty often correspond with a preference for abstract thought, deductive logic, and inductive writing.

Writer responsibility: Onus of responsibility for clear communication is placed on the writer. Writer responsibility is common among cultures with diverse populations in which readers arrive with a variety of values, native languages, and customary beliefs.

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