

Against Cultural Influence on Structuring A Discourse for Cross-Cultural Communication

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Abstract

With globalization ever on the increase, cross-cultural communication is becoming more and more important. Countries of the world depend on cross-cultural communication for all kinds of exchanges in industry, agriculture, technology, education, trade, tourism, etc. However, not in all the cases, cross-cultural communication achieves satisfactory results. Problems do happen that cause misleading, business failure, or unwanted situations. This article aims to identify the causes of the problem in this aspect through text analysis in attempt to improve the verbal communication situation. Major findings of the research include issues of discourse organization, text coherence, syntactic patterns, communication styles, diction, and persuasive means used. Through specific case analysis, the article concludes that the roots for all the issues lie in the cultural influences of either high-context or low context cultures that conflict in the aforementioned aspects.

Key words: cultural influence, discourse organization, and textual problems, high-context cultures, and low context cultures

1. Introduction

Cross-cultural communication refers to communication between two different cultures of different countries. It is an inevitable channel through which countries of different cultures make all kinds of exchanges. Nowadays, with the globalization ever on the increase, cross-cultural communication is of great importance. Successful cross-cultural communication promotes mutual benefits between the two countries involved in the communication process. Problematic cross-cultural communication may only lead to difficulty, misunderstanding, and undesired result. It is because of this reason, the author tries to identify issues in cross-cultural communication so as to help those who are doing international business or communication to create effective cross-cultural communication. Cross-cultural communication covers different aspects such as visual communication, non-verbal communication, oral communication, and written communication, among which written communication is most frequently used. This article mainly

focuses on written communication, which specifically refers to a discourse or a written speech or text. A discourse can display different styles according to the ways it is organized even if it is on the same topic. People from different cultures tend to have different styles for the same discourse topic which are called different rhetorical patterns by contrastive rhetoric theorists. This is because what appears on a sheet of paper is firstly decided by what is going on in the mind. As people of different cultures have different thought patterns, consequently they display different organizational patterns or styles in their discourses or texts. However, as people feel more comfortable reading a discourse organized in their familiar or conventional discourse patterns, they will find reading more enjoyable, easier to follow, and worthier of their time. Otherwise, they will find reading difficult, awkward, frustrating, and boring. Regarding discourse patterns or organizational styles, Robert Kaplan (1966) points out that there are at least five distinct patterns for structuring an expository discourse. Within Western cultures, for example, he distinguishes the English pattern which he calls linear, i.e. moving directly from the central idea to explanations and examples, from Romance and Russian patterns which permit some movement away from the central idea. In the English pattern such divergence would break the rules of relevance. Kaplan also identifies a Semitic pattern, covering the Arabic and related cultural traditions, which emphasises the development of an idea through parallelism: a statement is made and then repeated with a slight variation which adds to or reflects or contradicts the original meaning, and finally, the oriental pattern like Chinese which develops ideas in a spiral pattern. The diagram for these patterns are illustrated as follows:

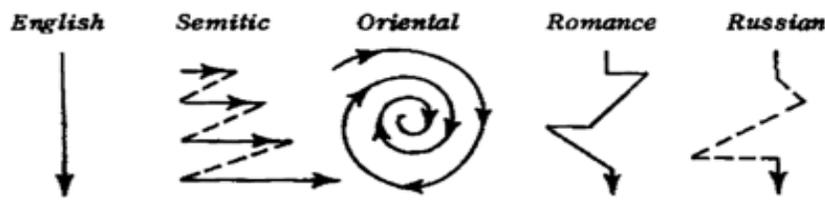


Figure1. Diagram for Cultural Thought Patterns|

Now the important significance of this diagram is that it indicates that an effective discourse organizational pattern is only so to the readers of the culture that has such a conventional discourse pattern, but no longer so to readers of a different culture that has a different conventional discourse pattern. What this means here is that an effective discourse pattern, when it is to be read by readers from a different culture may need to be adapted so as to meet the expectations of the intended readers and thus retain its effectiveness. Or in other words, a good writer when writes in a different language may no longer be a good writer if s/he still sticks to the rhetorical pattern of his/her own culture in writing in another language because his/her writing will not be easily accepted by the target audience. Here is an example of a speech by a Chinese businessman at a business conference:

Because most of our production is done in China now, and uh, it's not really certain how the government will react in the run-up to 1997, and since I think a certain amount of caution in committing to TV advertisement is necessary because of the expense. So, I suggest that we delay making our decision until after Lego makes its decision (Scollon, 1995).

On the appearance, this passage does not use difficult language, but the American business men still have difficulty grasping the main idea of the passage. The reason for this is that, as explained by Scollon, the listeners (American businessmen) and the speaker (a Chinese businessman) are using different principles to organize the presentation discourse. On the part of the speaker, the structure is this:

Because of

Y (topic, background, or reason)

X (comments, main points, or action suggested).

But normally, Westerners do not organize their presentational discourse in this pattern. Instead, they organize their discourse pattern like this:

X (comments, main points, or action suggested)

Because of

Y (topic, background, or reason) (p.143).

So, when American business persons used their thought pattern to interpret the message encoded in a different frame of reference, problems naturally occurred as two thought patterns conflicted. Readers can see that opposite methods were used for structuring the discourse. This example tells us a good writer will have to understand different discourse organizational methods of different cultures if s/he wants to remain a good writer when s/he writes for cross-cultural audiences in their language. Specifically, this article addresses the issues in structuring a discourse for cross-cultural communication from the perspectives of discourse organizational patterns, text coherence, diction, discourse sentence patterns, and persuasive means. As English is most frequently used language for international communication, the author will use its discourse rhetorical pattern, diction, sentence patterns, text coherence, and persuasive means as the benchmark to contrast other cultural discourse patterns and so on. Specifically, the author will mainly use some discourses written in Chinese to illustrate the problems as Chinese is so different from English that it is easy to for the reader to see contrastive cases and easy to see the problems. But firstly, the author will explain the major discourse patterns and text coherence approaches used by English and then he will move to other problems.

2. Indirect Discourse Pattern vs Direct Discourse Pattern

Normally, a discourse consists of author's (view) points and the supporting details for his/her points. If the author's point is implied or circuitously stated, the discourse displays an indirect pattern. There is also an inductive pattern if his/her point is delayed until all the supporting details are stated. Vice versa are a direct and deductive pattern respectively. So the organizational pattern is decided according to the ways that the point and supporting details are organized and expressed in a discourse. In American academic writing, it is conventional that the author is supposed to first state his point (viewpoint, position, hypothesis, supposition, assumption, argument, thesis, etc.), then use supporting details, such as facts, statistics, experts' testimonials, examples, personal experiences, common sense, findings, logical reasoning, other quotes, etc., to justify, or bolster, or rebut, or explain, or describe, or illustrate the points. So American writers follow a deductive pattern in structuring their expository writings, and their readers feel more comfortable reading a discourse organized in such a pattern, for a deductive pattern is linear or straightforward, direct in nature; thus easier. When a discourse organizational pattern contradicts their expectation, they have to adjust their thought pattern to accommodate the different pattern. Reading thus appears difficult for them. In contrast, Chinese writers normally follow an inductive pattern or even an implied pattern in structuring their expository discourse, which is non-linear, indirect or spiral in nature; thus more difficult. Here is an example written by Chinese writers for English-speaking readers.

From the Qin and Han Dynasties (221.B.C.- 220 A.D.)doctors in the interior of China begins (began) to prescribe more and more rhinoceros horn (Cornu Rhinocerotis) amber (Succinium), antelope's horn (Cornu Antelopsis) and musk (Moschus) from the minority nationalities; longan pulp (Arillus Longan), Lychee-seed (Semen Litchi) from the South China Sea and medical materials from southeast Asia and other region as a result of eve-developing communications and

transportation both inside and outside of China. This enriched the Chinese people's knowledge of medicine (Enwei 2003).

This paragraph discusses how the knowledge of medicine is enriched in Traditional Chinese Medicine, but the main point is delayed until the end of the paragraph. The specifics that lead to the conclusion include doctors' prescription of more kinds of drugs and more sources of drugs available from ever-developing transportation. The pattern is, because of A and B, thus C, a typical inductive process, which is not the conventional thought pattern of Americans. Thus, it is not well adapted to their pattern. Here is another one:

It analyses and differentiates febrile diseases according to the theory of six channels miscellaneous diseases according to the pathological changes of viscera and bowels and their interrelation, and in so doing establishes Chinese medicine's theoretical system and therapeutic principle, i.e., diagnosis and treatment based on an overall analysis of signs and symptoms. It lays a foundation for the development of clinical medicine (Enwei, 2003b).

It is obvious to see that the above paragraph does not follow a linear organization pattern, which is not easy to follow by an English-speaking reader. Later, an American editor revised it as the following:

The book analyzes and differentiates two groups of diseases: the febrile and the miscellaneous. In the former, the theory of six channels is discussed. In the latter, pathological changes of the viscera and the bowels, as well as their interactions, is discussed. This work establishes the theoretical system and the therapeutic principles of Chinese medicine. Also, this study lays the foundation for the development of clinical medicine. (Enwei 2003).

The revised version is more linear than the previous one, and is easier to follow the ideas expressed in the passage as the linearity accommodates English-speaking readers better for its being straightforward and not circuitous.

The above two examples illustrate the conventional thought pattern of the Chinese people in structuring their discourse. China falls within high-context cultures whose discourse organizational pattern is more characterized by the inductive and indirectness. Kaplan (1966 b) once pointed out:

Some oriental writing, on the other hand, is marked by what may be called an approach by indirection. In this kind of writing, the development of the paragraph may be said to be "turning and turning in a widening gyre." The circles or gyres turn around the subject and show it from a variety of tangential views, but the subject is never looked at directly. Things are developed in terms of what they are not, rather than in terms of what they are. Again, such a development in a modern English paragraph would strike the English readers as awkward and unnecessarily indirect (p.10).

To illustrate the gyres or circles mentioned in the quote, here is a passage about *I Ching* written by Chinese:

(1) Concluding from the discussion above *I Ching* (the Book of Changes) was a cooperative work written through a long period of time. (2) This book is different from *The Poems*, *The Document*, and the "Tze" type of books, which are based on one single philosopher's thoughts. (3) The former two were cooperative works, (4) but they were not based on a particular topic. (5) *The Poems* consisted of the poems of the Shang and Chou dynasties. (6) *The Document* is the collection of the governmental literature of the Tang, Yu, Shia Shang, and Chou dynasties. (7) *I Ching*, on the other hand, was not a literary work, nor governmental literature, but a work of fortune telling. (8) Seen as based on a central problem, it is quite like the "Tze" type of books; (9) for instance, *Chuang-tze* consisted of three parts. (10) The last two parts were not written by Chuang-tze himself, but is a collection of essays about him. (11) These essays were all based on Chuang-tze's principles, (12) and the discussions were explanations surrounding the concepts proposed by Chuang-tze. (13)

Another example, *Motze*, is quite similar too. (14) It was not written by Motze himself either, but by his followers. (15) However, there must be a basis in a person's thoughts for his followers' further development. (16) *I Ching* was not developed from a person's thought, but from a topic. (17) The essence of this topic seemed to be religious, (18) but it did not develop into a religion, as Christianity and Buddhism did, but into aspects of communication between God and man in ancient China, (19) There are different explanations about how the communication is achieved. (20) For example, in Christianity, oracles were directly given by God through prophets or priests; (21) similarly in ancient Chinese literature, God sometimes communicated directly with the rulers. (22) But according to *Chiagu pu-te* of the Yin dynasty, man learned God's will by casting lots instead of directly from God. (23) The "eight symbols" was also a medium for communication. (24) This kind of communication is only part of a religion, (25) but in Chou dynasty a complicated system casting lots was developed from it. (26) And from the casting lots system, a philosophical apprehension was of the origin of everything, the relationships between heaven and man, the significance of life, was developed. (28) This explanation was not a denial of the existing religious concept, but a combination of religion and philosophy. (29) Consequently, the development of the *I Ching* was not like Christianity, which never extended beyond religious aspects, rather it was more like that of Dionysianism in ancient Greece. (30) Dionysianism, according to contemporary research, was established on the ideology of lower class people, who had given up hope for the earthly world. (31) However, when it was combined with Pythagoreanism the religiousness turned into a mathematical philosophy, which was based on human apprehension. (32) This philosophy did not deny the original religion, but coexisted with it ().

Having read this passage, an American reader may feel difficult as it obviously does not follow a linear pattern because it is not a thesis-governed passage in which topic sentences support the thesis, with details supporting the topic sentences. Though the second sentence seems like a thesis, the actual comparison goes beyond the mentioned books. Sentence 13 switches to a different book, *Motze*, (deviates from the mentioned books in sentence 2). From sentences 19 to 24, the focus is on communication. Sentence 29 is about the development of *I Ching*. Secondly, it is somewhat like a spiral. By spiral, I mean something that repeats but also develops. Though the author wanders away from time to time, he returns to the book of *I Ching* and develops some new ideas, such as the topic, and the religious and philosophical nature of the book. For example, he repeats the idea of *I Ching's* not being of one person's idea as stated at the beginning, but he develops the idea of topic to further understand *I Ching*. He repeats the religious nature of the book in sentences 24 and 31, but develops the idea of philosophy in the book.

Obviously, the inductive pattern or the spiral (gyre) pattern is not suitable to accommodate American readers. Neither is the implied pattern. Look at the following passage:

I am not a policy maker, but I have a dream of tractors singing in the fields and trucks roaring effortlessly on roads. I am not an agricultural technical program planner, but I have a dream of seeing farmers studying science and technology, and working comfortably with machinery (Conner, 2001,p38)

It can be seen that the writer wants to criticize the inefficiency of the Chinese Department of Agriculture, but he did not speak his intention explicitly. Instead, he expressed it by using his dreams, what he hopes will come true, to suggest that the Department should try to realize these good things.

This is a typical example of an implied pattern of discourse that requires a reader to read between lines, which may not be liked by American readers. Ge Gao and Stella Ting-Toomy (1989) in their book *Communicating Effectively with the Chinese* use the Chinese adages "*Pang qiao ce ji*" (Beat around the bush), *Yi zai yan wai* (Meaning lies beyond words) and the American adages "Don't beat around the bush"

and “Say what you mean” to show the difference in American communication style and Chinese communication style – indirect vs. direct (p.78). The two adages cited by them actually point to this fact. However, writers of both countries need to remember that they must learn to adapt to each other’s conventional discourse patterns if they want their works well accepted. Regarding the causes for Chinese indirect and spiral discourse patterns, Shijie Guan (2000), a professor from Beijing University, holds that it was because China did not have a mature philosophy or science that dealt with logic until after the middle 19th century when Yanfu, a famous Chinese scholar, first introduced logic into China. And the word logic is still translated phonetically as there is no such equivalent word in Chinese. Guan says in his article, “A Comparison of Sino-American Thinking Patterns,” that Chinese tend to have imagery and relational thinking rather than conceptual and logical thinking that Westerners have (p. 26). As for the spiral pattern, Hu Shuzhong (1992), a professor from Shanghai Foreign Languages Institute, considers that the ancient Chinese “eight-legged essay,” an essay form that used to be the standard official literary form from the 15th century until the early 20th century, had great influence on this pattern. The final two parts of the eight-legged essay always repeat what has been discussed in the previous few parts, which may have caused the Chinese rhetorical pattern to appear as a spiral (p.49).

3. Textual Coherence

A text is only meaningful when it possesses coherence and cohesion. However, textual coherence and cohesion are achieved through different ways in different language. To understand these differences is of importance to writers who write for cross-cultural audiences. Limited by the space, the discussion will focus on ways to achieve textual coherence in the English language. According to Mona Baker (2013), an English passage is made up of series of sentences, each of which can be broken up into two parts: the theme and the rheme. The theme is what the sentence or clause is about and the rheme is what the speaker says about the theme. The theme has two functions: a) it acts as the point of orientation by connecting back to the previous stretches of discourse and thereby maintaining a coherent point of view, and b) it acts as a point of departure by connecting forward and contributing to the development of later stretches (p.133). So what a writer needs to do to make sure his/her passage achieves coherence is to see if any connection is found between the themes and between the rheme and the following theme. If not, the information flow is poor and needs improvement. Otherwise, the passage makes no sense. This theme-rheme structure is called thematic structure, which is used to test the coherence in an English text. However, an Italian writer when wrote in English still followed the Italian language textual coherence approach and produced a passage as follows:

What inspired that rebellious young poet called Rimbaud? What drove him to reach into the innermost part of his soul in search of the undiscovered? It allowed him to take words that already existed and yet express himself in a completely new way? Some creators are brave enough to realize their dreams without compromise. It is men like this who created MX-5 in 1989. By ignoring rules they are constantly reshaping the future. Even now they are realizing a new dream. They work for Mazda (p.125)

This passage does not make sense to English reader because its coherence creation is influenced by the Italian culture. Using the thematic structure mentioned above, a reader can see none of the themes in the text has a link with the previous theme or the rheme. In other words, *It* is not related to either the previous theme or the rheme. The theme of the fourth sentence relates only indirectly and very weakly to Rimbaud. So the lack of coherence is obvious in terms of the English thematic structure. However, it may not be so in the Italian language.

As most of East Asian languages like Chinese, Japanese, Korean, etc. follow a different structure called topic-comment structure in building their sentence sequences, writers of these languages when writing in English

need to pay attention to the English thematic structure and avoid being influenced by their textual coherence approaches.

In addition, textual coherence in English is also achieved by frequently using cohesive devices like conjunctions (e.g. however, nevertheless, because, since, etc.) and disjuncts (e.g. frankly, consequently, clearly, in my opinion, etc.), but such a phenomenon does not exist in some oriental languages like Chinese, which forms coherence by relying on the internal logical meanings of the sentences. Thus, a Chinese writer who writes for English readers may still be influenced by such ways. Here is an example that does not read like idiomatic English because of lack of the necessary conjunctions and disjuncts:

In the last twenty years or so, some underdeveloped countries have increase their food production. Their populations at the same time grown faster. Their standard of living hasn't improved. The increase in food production has been achieved at the expense of using up marginal lands. There has been no gain in the productivity of land labor (Zhang, 2007, p.527).

However, if disjuncts are inserted like *however* (put immediately after populations), *and so* (put before their standard...), *What's more* (before their increase...), and *As a result* (before there has been...), the passage will read more coherently.

4. Syntactical Patterns

Each language has its own syntactical patterns. In order to meet the expectation of cross-cultural audiences, writers may also need to understand the sentence patterns their language prefers. English is the language that likes to use hypotactic sentences: sentences that have a main clause with many subordinate clauses. In other words, they are like trees with many branches. Here is an example:

When I try to understand what it is that prevents so many Americans from being as happy as one might expect, it seems to me that there are two cases, of which one goes much deeper than the other (Lian, 1993, p 49).

In this sentence, the main clause (the trunk) is "it seems to me that..." Other clauses are when..., what..., as one might..., and which...are all subordinate clauses (branches), so it is a typical hypotactic sentence. However, some other languages like Chinese prefers paratactic sentences, which are a series of sentences put together like a train; each weighs equally in the series. For example, "It rained heavily last night; the river got flooded; some houses were washed away, and some people became homeless" is a typical paratactic sentence. Subordination and coordination are the important characteristics of hypotactic sentences and paratactic sentences respectively. The point here is that people who use paratactic language will be influenced by this cultural convention and still use their language pattern to address cross-cultural audiences who belong to hypotactic language. A Chinese writer, when introduces the city of Guilin to Westerners writes a paragraph like this:

Guilin is a beautiful city; it has a population of five hundred thousand people; it is located in the south of China, and its landscape is second to none in the world
(Guilin Tourist Bureau, 1999, p.1).

Clearly, the paragraph follows the paratactic pattern. But this pattern here may appear choppy or immature to an English-speaking reader, for it is likely an English writer may revise this paragraph like this: Situated in the south of China, Guilin, a beautiful city with a population of five hundred thousand, has the landscape that is second to none in the world. In this case, the paratactic patterns disappears, and it is more able to meet the convention of the audience. Hypotactic languages appear very compact in form while paratactic languages appear very diffusive in form.

5. Diction

In addition to the organizational patterns and coherence achievement of a discourse, there are other elements to be considered which vary greatly with different cultures such as dictions, persuasive means, and cultural values. All these elements are inseparable from discourse structuring. Discourses of different cultures display different preferences for using words, different conventional means of persuasion, styles of communication, and the different values and attitudes towards secular affairs. So, in structuring a discourse, a writer needs to adapt to those elements to meet the expectations of the cross-cultural audience. Failure to do this may cause the discourse to be unwelcomed by the audience. Take diction for example, in some cultures like China, Japan, and Korea, people tend to use flowery language, pompous phrases, idioms, adages, proverbs, adjectives, and nouns while in English, people prefer to use verbs, and concise, simple, and direct language.

Ex. 1. I walked joyfully along the winding path lit up by the golden rays of the sun in the serene morning. Beautiful, multicolored flowers were blooming. How fragrant they smelled! Littlemerry birds were singing pleasantly in the trees, as if greeting me “Good morning! Good morning!”--- my heart was bursting with immense happiness.

Ex.2. The road went up the hill and we got into the woods, and the road kept on climbing. Sometimes it dipped down but rose again steeply. All the time we heard the cattle in the woods. Finally, the road came out on top of the hills. We saw wild strawberries growing on the sunny side of the ridge in a little clearing in the trees. (He & Xiang, 1995)

Both passages are a descriptive discourse. The Chinese writer (Ex.1) used more adjectives and adverbs in the discourse while the English writer (Ex.2) used more verbs. So trying to avoid cultural influence on diction is also important. Otherwise, English readers may think the discourse too pedantic and showy. In the same vein, Chinese reader may think the discourse too plain or tasteless.

6. Cultural Values

To help understand cultural characteristics, anthropologists, like Edward Hall (1975) divided cultures into two major categories according to their commonalities: high-context cultures vs. low-context cultures. A high context culture is one in which the communicators assume a great deal of commonality of knowledge and views, so that less is spelled out explicitly and much more is implicit or communicated in indirect ways like embedding messages in the context. A low context culture is one in which things are fully (though concisely) spelled out. Things are made explicit, and there is considerable dependence on what is actually said or written. This is just like what a Japanese manager explained to an American about his culture’s communication style: “We are a homogeneous people and don’t have to speak as much as you do here. When we say one word, we understand ten, but here you have to say ten to understand one.”

Important characteristics of a high-context culture’s communication style are relational, collectivist, intuitive, and contemplative. This means that people in these cultures emphasize interpersonal relationships, prefer group harmony, and consensus to individual achievement. And people in these cultures are less governed by reason than by intuition or feelings. Words are not so important as contextual clues such as the speaker’s tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, posture—and even the person’s family history and status. High-context communication tends to be more indirect and more formal. Flowery language and modest attitude, and long-term orientation are preferred. High-context cultures include much of the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and South America (Muffey, 2010, p.14).

In contrast, important characteristics of a low-context culture’s communication style are logical, linear, individualistic, and action-oriented. People from low-context cultures value logic, facts, and directness. Solving a problem means lining up the facts and evaluating one after another. Decisions are

based on fact rather than intuition. Discussions end with actions. And communicators are expected to be straightforward, concise, and efficient in telling what action is expected. To be absolutely clear, they strive to use precise words and intend them to be taken literally. Explicit contracts conclude negotiations. This is very different from communicators in high-context cultures who depend less on language precision and legal documents. High-context business people may even distrust contracts and be offended by the lack of trust they suggest. Low-context cultures include North America and much of Western Europe (p.14).

In light of the key characteristics listed above, it is not difficult to see that the following letter written by *Beijing Review* to refuse a British journalist's manuscript was not able to break away from China's high-context communication style that emphasizes harmonious relationship, modesty, and indirectness.

We have read your manuscript with boundless delight. If we were to publish your paper, it would be impossible for us to publish any work of a lower standard. And as it is unthinkable that, in the next thousand years, we shall see its equal, we are to our regret, compelled to return your divine composition, and beg you a thousand times to overlook our short sight and timidity (Zahid & Song 2001).

To an English reader, the letter is unnecessarily indirect, or may be hypocritical, even insincere, or sarcastic. So better to follow the straightforward or get-to-the-point style of the low-context's cultural communication style. However, indirectness is typical of Chinese writings, which normally use stories, allegories, fables, etc. to communicate an author's intentions. Chinese people value group harmony, so they do not use confrontational language as they think it may appear too blunt or offensive.

7. Persuasive Means

People of low-context cultures tend to use logic reasoning, or evidence like facts, statistics, etc. to persuade people more than using emotions. But people of high-context tend to appeal to emotions in persuasion. The following passage which is part of a letter of apology can illustrate this:

First of all, thanks to much of your efforts to make us be able to understand the book. After the first two classes, I think 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 (McCool, 2009).

The letter is inappropriate for an English professor because instead of directly stating the causes for the failure, the writer appealed to flattery, something that he thought would please the professor so that he could be excused. But appealing to emotion is not a favored strategy for Westerners who emphasize logic reasoning and evidence. Their conventional persuasive means used in writing includes enthymeme, a rhetorical syllogism, and use of evidence such as facts, data, experience, examples, common sense, etc. Flattery used in the above letter may embarrassed the professor a bit and caused him to think the student not on a rational ground. But such strategy works fine in much of the high-context cultures. In fact, other culture- influenced persuasive means commonly used by Asian people of the high-context culture include appealing to traditions, popularity (bandwagon), and authority. But all these need to be avoided in a discourse for persuasive purposes. Using logic reasoning (or enthymeme), statistics, facts, examples, experience, etc. to persuade an English-speaking reader is more effective in most cases than using feelings.

8. Conclusion

Edward Hall (1976) pointed out that communication is culture and culture is communication. Language, as an important means of communication, is also a carrier cultural messages. As actual instances of language use, discourses naturally communicate cultural messages: the writers' thought patterns, their conventions of using language, their values, assumptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards worldly things. So, as long as a writer opens his/her mouth to speak or puts words on paper, s/he is producing a discourse, or in other words,

s/he is communicating these cultural messages. However, these messages are so deeply rooted in the writer's mind, and s/he is so used to them that s/he tends to no longer realize their existence at times. So, when there are chances for her/him to use another language, s/he subliminally injects his/her cultural elements into this foreign language and totally forgets the use of such a foreign language should follow a different set of cultural rules but not his/hers any more. The result? S/he only produces some discourses which are not appreciated or welcomed by the intended readers and even cause troubles as explained in the foregoing sections. So, cultural differences as shown in the section of high-context and low-context categories, are the roots for ineffective cross-cultural communication. To avoid such a situation, writers need again to let the foreign language they are using, which carries a set of cultural messages different from theirs, follow its own cultural ways. In this way they can warily guard against of their own cultural influence and structure a discourse that will be well accepted and appreciated by the intended audiences.

Specifically, only by paying attention to discourse organizational patterns, text coherence approaches, use of words, communication styles, syntactic patterns, persuasive means, and cultural values, referring to the different characteristics of both low and high context cultures listed above, and adapting any improper use of the above elements to meet the expectation of the intended audience, can they structure a discourse for successful cross-cultural communication.

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