

3. The physical environment in which your reader will read your document. Often, technical documents are formatted specially or constructed of special materials to improve their effectiveness.

9. Communicating Across Cultures

Our society and our workforce are becoming increasingly diverse, both culturally and linguistically, and businesses are exporting more and more goods and services. As a result, technical communicators and technical professionals often communicate with non-native speakers of English in the United States and with speakers of other languages who read texts translated from English into their languages.

10. Understanding the Cultural Variables

Communicating effectively with people from another culture requires understanding several cultural variables that lie on the surface. You need to know, first, what language or languages to use. You also need to be aware of political, social, religious, and economic factors that can affect how readers will interpret your documents. Understanding these factors is not an exact science, but it does require that you learn as much as you can about the culture of those you are addressing.

In *International Technical Communication*, Nancy L. Hoft (1995) describes seven major categories of cultural variables that lie on the surface:

1. Political.
2. Economic.
3. Social.
4. Religious.
5. Educational.

6. Technological.

7. Linguistic.

Notice how the writer describes his company in terms of its long history and its cutting-edge technology. In Japan, a long history suggests trustworthiness.

He emphasizes the concept of fulfilling customers' needs through high performance, safety, and environmental awareness.

Here he describes his company's commitment to realizing a prosperous and sustainable society. This focus emphasizes the Japanese concept of living in harmony with the physical environment.

This year, FDK marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of the company. Keeping our customers in mind, we supply high performance batteries and electronic devices based on material technology which FDK has cultivated over many years and which increases the value and function of our customers' products.

While the business environment in our product markets has been changing dramatically on a global scale as a result of progress from globalization and network technology, we strive for stable management from a global viewpoint. In response to our customers' needs, we offer products and services created in pursuit of the highest possible performance, accompanied by safety and environmental friendliness.

To contribute to society through manufacturing, we aim to realize the affluent society by pursuing the realization of the 3 Es (Energy Security, Environmental Protection, and Economic Efficiency) to build a sustainable society.

Figure 5.4 Statement by a Japanese Electronics Company President

Source: Ono, 2010 <www.fdk.co.jp/company_e/message-e.html>.

There is no denying the fact that the Combined Civil Services Foundation Course, held for different Services at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Mussoorie, provides a great and unique opportunity for developing 'spirit de corps' [sic] and fostering appropriate attitudes and values in the young minds of the Probationers belonging to different Services. The importance of imbibing these values right in the beginning of the career of the officers can hardly be overemphasized.

This paragraph from a report by managers of Indian Railways describes a training course that new employees are required to take.

The reference to "esprit de corps" (group spirit) and "fostering appropriate attitudes and values in the young minds of the Probationers" suggests a culture in which age and seniority are considered to be the most important characteristics of a successful employee and in which it is the duty of elders to teach young people proper values.

Figure 5.5 Statement from an Indian Training Manual

Source: Indian Railways, 2010 <www.indianrailways.gov.in/indianrailways/directorate/mgt_ser/training_circulars/report_iras.pdf>.

11. Guidelines for writing for readers from other cultures

The following eight suggestions will help you communicate more effectively with multicultural readers.

- Limit your vocabulary. Every word should have only one meaning, as called for in Simplified English and other basic English languages.
- Keep sentences short. There is no magic number but try for an average length of no more than 20 words.
- Define abbreviations and symbols in a glossary. Don't assume that your readers know what a GFI (ground fault interrupter) is, because the abbreviation is derived from English vocabulary and word order.
- Avoid jargon unless you know your readers are familiar with it. For instance, your readers might not know what a graphical user interface is.
- Avoid terminology and slang. These terms are culture-specific. If you tell your Japanese readers that your company plans to put on a "*full-court press*," most likely they will be confused.
- Use the active voice whenever possible. The active voice is easier for non-native speakers of English to understand than the passive voice.
- Be careful with graphics. The garbage-can icon on the Macintosh computer does not translate well, because garbage cans have different shapes and can be made of different materials in other countries.
- Be sure someone from the culture reviews your document. Even if you have had help in planning the document, have it reviewed before you publish and distribute it.

12. Determining Your Purpose

Once you have identified and analyzed your audience, it is time to examine your purpose. Ask yourself this: “What do I want this document to accomplish?” When your readers have finished reading what you have written, what do you want them to know or believe? What do you want them to do? Your writing should help your readers understand a concept, hold a particular belief, or carry out a task.

13. Elementary Rules of Usage

The Elementary Rules of Usage in English encompass a range of guidelines for effective writing. These rules cover various aspects of punctuation, grammar, and pronoun usage to ensure clarity and coherence in written communication. Let's improve and provide examples for each section:

1. Possessive Singular Nouns:

- **Rule:** Form possessive singular nouns by adding 's.

Example: The dog's bone, Sarah's car.

2. Exceptions:

- **Rule:** Exceptions include possessives of ancient proper names ending in -es and -is, the possessive Jesus', and forms like for conscience' sake, for righteousness' sake.

Example: Moses' staff, for goodness' sake.

3. Pronominal Possessives:

- **Rule:** Pronominal possessives hers, its, theirs, yours, and ours have no apostrophe. Indefinite pronouns use the apostrophe to show possession.

Example: Hers is the blue one. Someone's book is on the table.

4. Comma Usage in Sentences:

- **Rule:** Use a comma after each term in a series of three or more terms with a single conjunction.

Example: I bought apples, oranges, and bananas.

5. Enclosing Parenthetical Expressions:

- **Rule:** Enclose parenthetical expressions between commas.

Example: The best way to see a country, unless you are pressed for time, is to travel on foot.

6. Nonrestrictive Relative Clauses:

- **Rule:** Clauses introduced by which, when, and where are nonrestrictive; they do not limit or define, they merely add something.

Example: The audience, which had at first been indifferent, became more and more interested.

7. Semicolons and Conjunctions:

- **Rule:** If two or more clauses grammatically complete and not joined by a conjunction are to form a single compound sentence, the proper mark of punctuation is a semicolon.

Example: The situation is unsafe; there is still one chance of escape.

8. Colon Usage:

- **Rule:** Use a colon after an independent clause to introduce a list of particulars, an appositive, an amplification, or an illustrative quotation.

Example: There are three things I need: water, food, and shelter.

9. Dashes:

- **Rule:** A dash is used to set off an abrupt break or interruption and to announce a long appositive or summary.

Example: The rear axle began to make a noise—a crushing, teeth-gritting rasp.

10. Subject-Verb Agreement:

- **Rule:** The number of the subject determines the number of the verb.

Example: The affecting flavor of youth is not soon forgotten.

11. Understanding Grammar and Pronoun Usage:

- **Rule:** Singular verbs are often used in relative clauses when the relative is the subject.

Example: The person who sings is happy.

12. Compound Subjects and Pronouns:

- **Rule:** Compound subjects are formed of two or more nouns joined by and almost always require a plural verb.

Example: Apples and oranges are fruits.

13. Linking Verbs and Nouns:

- **Rule:** A linking verb agrees with the number of its subject.

Example: The trouble with truth is its many varieties.

14. Pronoun Case and Subject:

- **Rule:** Personal pronouns change form as they function as subjects or objects.

Example: He saw her.

15. Participial Phrases and Subject:

- **Rule:** A participial phrase at the beginning of a sentence must refer to the grammatical subject.

Example: Running fast, he won the race.

By adhering to these rules, writers can ensure clarity and coherence in their writing, thereby effectively communicating their ideas.